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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# RECLAIMING OUR TEACHING LIVES:
# THE CURRICULUM OF MIDDLE SPACE

BY

**DEBRA L. SCHROEDER** ©

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1996

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The very things that are our
prisons
are also our hope
for education, for inquiry, for growth . . . .

We need to create spaces so teachers and students can begin to tell their stories and to have responses from many different voices in order to help them imagine new possible retellings.

(Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J., 1992)

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# DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated to my husband, Gunner,
whose love, encouragement, faith and help
supported and sustained me in my work.**

And lovingly presented to

my children, Christy and Kurt,

my Mom and Dad

and my sisters, Valerie and Robin.

# ABSTRACT

This collaborative narrative study is situated in a storytelling group of four teacher-researchers and one researcher-teacher. It is grounded in our experiences as teachers and learners. It is shared in our conversations and stories. Responding to the disconnection we and our students often experienced in our educational institutions, we were drawn to re-search those moments where mind, body and spirit, theory and practice, private and public were dichotomized and we were called to imagine a pedagogy and a curriculum wherein they could be reconnected. Looking to the work of Grumet (1988), who envisioned curriculum as a conversation, rather than a conveyance designed to transport the child from the private to the public world, we asked how we could make our classrooms a real space in the middle. Through our stories we constructed a curriculum of middle space.

Challenging traditional notions of curriculum as delivered, this research explores the dilemmas teachers experience as they try to create a sacred space for themselves and their students in the public place of school. It looks at the social construction and reconstruction of knowledge within classrooms and in the research process. Within the ethical relationship of good company, the participants created a middle space for their own learning and explored the potential of collaborative storytelling for teachers' professional development. Conversations provided data for reflections and reconstructions. Listening attentively, we heard stories behind the stories we were telling and repositioned the personal in the political. Interrogating master narratives and sacred stories throughout this process of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly (1994), we reframed our experiences (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) and transformed our personal stories into a public and political text.

These stories are not treated as objective data. They must be judged in the resonance of shared experience they re-present, and in the understanding and changed practice they facilitate. Neither the research scene nor the story of the research arranged themselves. Like our knowledge, both have been constructed and reconstructed (Dewey, 1938, 1963; Eisner, 1991; Freire, 1990; Greene, 1988). The choices made in our quest for understanding are made explicit and the creative, interpretive process of construction and reconstruction are foregrounded in the research text.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the four teachers who participated in this inquiry, Anne, Kelly, Lisa and Margaret. Although I have authored the research story, the middle space of curriculum and of our research group was collaboratively constructed and reconstructed through their conversations, stories and responses as well as through the friendships and professional relationships we developed while working together. I would like to thank them for the time they committed to this project, for their honesty, for their stories, for their tears, for their laughter and for their trust.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of my advisor and teacher, Dr. D. Jean Clandinin, whose ability to create a middle space with her students encouraged me to restory and reconnect the personal and professional in this study. I appreciate the space you gave me to fail, to succeed, to risk, to learn and to imagine new possibilities, Jean. I appreciate your reading and rereading of my work, your gentle suggestions, your thoughtful responses but most of all, I appreciate the value you place on teachers' stories and the space your work has made for teachers' voices.

A special thank you to Dr. Don Massey, Dr. Roberta McKay and Dr. Linda LaRocque who have supported me in my role as a doctoral student and a researcher over a number of years. Your encouragement, suggestions, interest made my journey richer. I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Rooke for joining my committee. Her willingness to share her perspective and to take the time to understand mine were appreciated. I am also appreciative of the time Dr. Joe Kincheloe, my External Examiner, spent reading and responding to my dissertation.

Kathie Webb, Christina Mader and I were doctoral students together. We shared adventures and misadventures. We became true friends. No matter where our paths may lead us, we will not forget the time we spent together, the comfort and support we found in each other's presence, the part we played in each other's stories.

But I would also like to thank the my friends at home, the friends who wished I wasn't always looking for adventures but who remained my friends even when I didn't have time or energy left to be a friend. I thank them for their promise to keep me grounded as I left to climb my mountain, for their belief in me and for being there when I got back.

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| Figure 1. | Page 4 | Photograph of Rene Magritte's painting, *The Key of Dreams*, by Rudolph Burckhardt, on the cover of John Berger's book, Ways of seeing. (1972). London: Penguin. |
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| Figure 3. | Page 75 | In the public domain, an etching from Camille Flammarion's book, L'atmosphere. (1986). London: Duckworth. |
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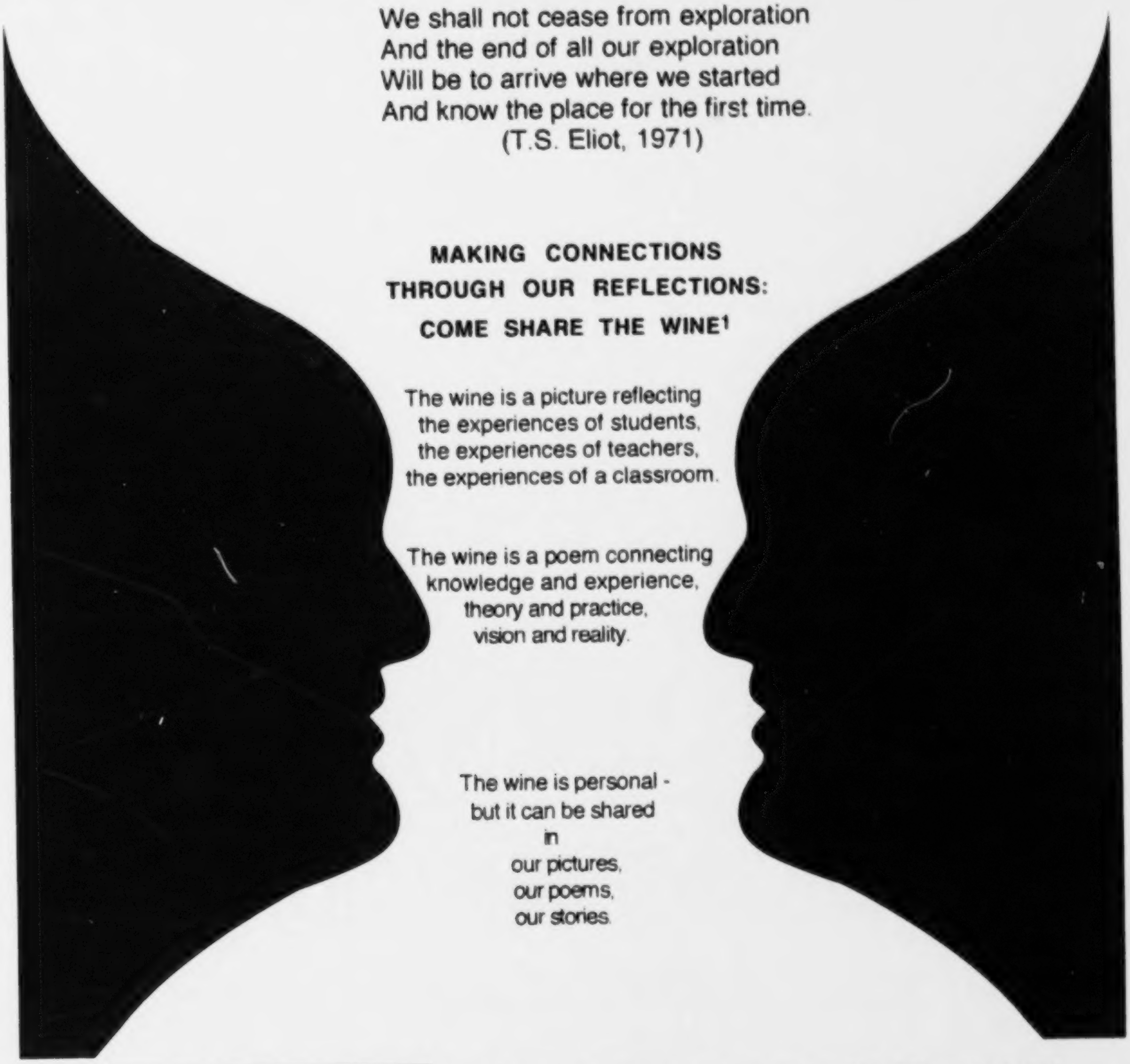
# CHAPTER ONE

# AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AWAKENINGS TO THE QUESTION



We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
(T.S. Eliot, 1971)

## MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH OUR REFLECTIONS: COME SHARE THE WINE[1]

The wine is a picture reflecting
the experiences of students,
the experiences of teachers,
the experiences of a classroom.

The wine is a poem connecting
knowledge and experience,
theory and practice,
vision and reality.

The wine is personal -
but it can be shared
in
our pictures,
our poems,
our stories.

---

[1] (Schroeder, Debra. 1988a). Excerpts from a paper with this title (pp. 53 - 62) are included throughout this chapter. Although this paper was published in 1988, I had written many of the poems and stories prior to that time. In writing the 1988 paper, I revised some of the stories and poems and in writing this research text some have been revised yet again. Although such revisions may not be documented, the re-visioning of these experiences - an ongoing and unending process, part of a ceaseless exploration "to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time" (Eliot, 1971, p. 145) - is essential epistemologically and methodologically to this re-search.

# PART I.

# THE WINE IS PERSONAL BUT IT CAN BE SHARED

**.... Come share the wine**

Search for the meaning that is concealed
Inside each moment through living revealed
Capture the essence, suspend the time
Faithfully paint it, line after line.
Portray the vision, record the rhyme
Create a picture - each facet enshrine.
Ferment with perception - meaning refine
Others behind you will come share the wine
Wine that gets better and better with age,
Wine that brings pleasure and life to the stage.
A stage where the actors are now engaged
In sharing the moment you left on the page.
Your vision was faithful.
Your message rang true.
Your gift to mankind will honour them too.
(Schroeder, 1988a)

Reflective Turn: Because everything can not exist in consciousness, and less so in print, in the same space or at the same time it is necessary for some things to come first and some things to come later. Although this is not the time nor the place in the linear presentation of this research in which I wish to address methodological issues; a glimpse ahead, a foreshadowing of the stylistic realm which offers a reflection of and a metaphor for the epistemological considerations which guided this research may help the reader. To set the stage, I therefore offer a passage from *Awakenings* (Sacks, 1990, p. xvii), a book written about a group of patients who contracted sleeping-sickness and who were frozen in a decades-long sleep until they were awakened by the drug L-DOPA.

> The general style of this book - with its alternation of narrative and reflection, its proliferation of images and metaphors, its remarks, repetitions, asides, and footnotes - is one which I have been impelled towards by the very nature of the subject-matter. My aim is not to make a system. . . but to picture a world, a

> variety of worlds - the landscapes of being in which these patients reside. And the picturing of worlds requires not a static and systematic formulation, but an active exploration of images and views, a continual jumping-about and imaginative movement. The stylistic (and epistemological) problems encountered have been precisely those described by Wittgenstein in the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations* when he spoke of the necessity of depicting landscapes (thoughtscapes) by images and 'remarks':
> . . . This was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction. The. . . remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of the long and involved journeyings. The same or almost the same points were always being approached from different directions, and new sketches made.... Thus this book is really only an album."

And we must remember, even as this thesis is not the only album which could have been assembled, it will not be seen in the same way by every reader. As Sacks commented in response to the many public interpretations of his book, "Every reader brings to *Awakenings* his own imagination and sensibilities, and so too does every writer, every actor, every director, who has been inspired by it and gone on to create a version of his own. Thus there have emerged. . .several radically different versions of *Awakenings* in dramatic form" (Sacks, 1990, p. 367).

In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Berger helps us understand that these many personal versions are possible because, "we only see what we look at" and looking "is an act of choice" (p. 8). But he also says what we choose to look at and what we are ultimately able to see are "affected by what we know or what we believe" (p. 8).

> Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. . . The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. . . . Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing (p. 10).

What we name this image, this experience, this story is socially, culturally, historically, politically and contextually determined. There is no seeing, there is no naming, there is no story which can exist apart from the world, apart from our relationships in the world.

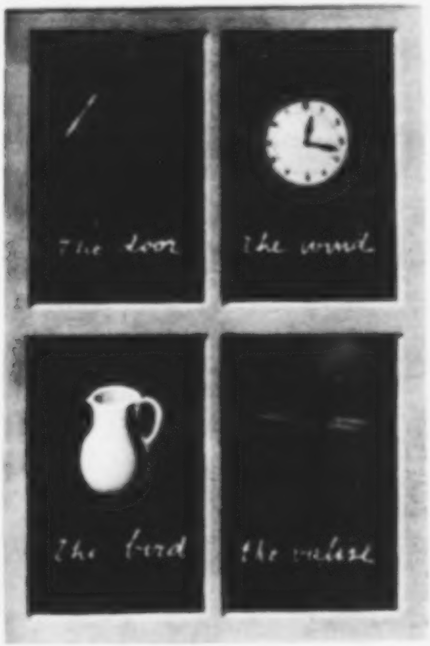


**Figure 1.** **Photograph by Rudolph Buckhardt of Magritte's painting, *Key of Dreams*, on the cover of John Berger's book, Ways of Seeing (1972).**

### .... Portrait of a lady

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself - as it will seem to do -
With 'I have saved this afternoon for you';
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.
(Eliot,1954)

Reflective Turn: In examining the notions of social construction and reflexivity and presenting biography as a strategy to resist the "universal process of knowledge-power," [2] Soderqvist (1991) stresses the importance of seeing the biographical narrative as constructed, reflexive and open to questions of relationship between the biographical construct and the biographer's embodied life. However, this autobiographical introduction or account can not be delivered "more with a self-assertive attitude than with a serious intention to expose the incidental and idiosyncratic details of the research process" (p.148) if the author's intent is to resist knowledge-power and to insist upon the embodied nature and socially constructed character of knowledge. For if authority and authorization overshadow the text, if the scene is presented as 'arranging itself', if it leads to the idea of a true story, autobiography becomes an "excellent way of distorting or hiding the local and contingent character of the construction of knowledge claims" and "easily turns into ideology as it becomes yet another protective layer surrounding the exercise of knowledge-power" (p. 149).

Soderqvist has therefore proposed that autobiographical reflexivity be employed as a "way of counteracting biography's non-intentional contribution to the reification of an objective reality" (p.155). This reflexivity would introduce elements of the writer's autobiography into the text and bring the writer's presence and the contingent, local and embodied character of the production of text and therefore of knowledge construction to the reader's attention. For this to be accomplished, he says, the writer may need to move beyond the genre of scholarly reports into the realm of literature and art.

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[2] Soderqvist (1991) defines 'knowledge-power' as the institutional relation between formal knowledge and the power of scientists, intellectuals and other knowledge claimants in the 'modern world' - a world which he sees as defined and constituted by "the all-pervasive impact of abstract and objective knowledge and rational conduct in all spheres of life" (p. 144). "The key element in the institutions of science and scholarship, and hence in the reproduction of knowledge-power, is the idea of objective knowledge. . . . Objective knowledge representing real world events has priority over personal experiences in which representation of inner states can not be excluded. Experiences that are not incorporated into the body of scientific, scholarly and professional knowledge are degraded as 'subjective', 'mere folk belief', etc." (pp. 146 - 147). Soderqvist further posits the social constructionist movement as a deconstructionist movement in that it is an attempt to "oppose the exercise of knowledge-power" and is a stance "directed towards the claim for foundations of objective knowledge in general (Dews, 1987)" (p. 148).

## .... Like a little candle

*A four year old girl from Saskatchewan sat with her nose pressed against the window as the train wound through the mountains and the valleys from Calgary to Vancouver. She was mesmerized by the kaleidoscope of beauty passing before her eyes. As she watched, to the amusement of her parents and the nearby passengers, she sang - over and over again - a song that she had just learned in Daily Vacation Bible School. A song that would wind it's way into her heart and her imagination as deeply as the sparkling mountain streams, lacy ferns and enchanted forests of green which the train was curving through.*

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,
Like a little candle burning in the night
In this world of darkness we must shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine.

*Although she was not old enough to understand the authoritative or moral implications of this song, she was old enough to visualize a candle shining in the dark and to recognize that the words of this song presented her with a challenge and a call to action. Not liking the dark and haunted by the pictures of isolation and feelings of disconnection the song painted in her mind, she sensed that shining alone in a dark corner would be a difficult thing to do. Still she felt she wanted to do whatever it was one had to do to shine and she felt herself encouraged by the thought that even if she were alone in her own corner, her own space, there was the possibility that she would be in a room with many corners and therefore not really alone but in the company of other lights who were also trying to shine.*

## .... The light is dimmed

*I had only just started school when I learned there was a rule that said I could not leave the playground and go home to my mother - not even if I was hurt. I had been playing outside at noon when a big bully, who had made my life miserable on more than one occasion, purposely ran into me hard enough* *to knock the wind out of me and then left me lying on the ground dirty and hurt. After I could breathe again, scraped and in need of care, I got up and ran to my home which was near the school. My mother washed me, changed me into my favourite flared pink skirt with straps and a matching blouse, gave me a kiss and sent me running back to school reassured and happy.*

*Unfortunately, the clean-up process had taken a bit too long and I came into the classroom after the story had already begun. The teacher stopped reading, but instead of expressing her happiness at my return, she scolded me in front of the class for doing such a terrible thing. With a few cross words she wiped out all the self-confidence my mother had just tried to restore. She took away the pleasure I had until that moment associated with being in school. She taught me "a lesson" that was far more significant than the one she no doubt supposed I had learned and she taught it so well that I have never forgotten my teacher didn't care that I was scared or hurt, that she didn't care my mom had been able to make me feel better again, that she didn't even care that I had not known there was a rule stating I could not go home when I stayed at school for lunch.*

*She taught me that there was a line between the world of home and the world of school and that by crossing this invisible boundary I had acted like a baby. She may have been worried. She may have felt it was her duty to teach me something for my own good. But in my humiliation, I never felt her concern or experienced her care and as my little light dimmed I felt disconnected from the home I had known and the self I had been.*

Reflective Turn: Sacks (1984), speaks of a similar experience of disconnection from himself in his book, *A Leg to Stand On*. He reflects upon the feelings of alienation he experienced from both himself and the world during his experience as a patient in a hospital setting . . . .

> And to these grotesque fantasies were added the realities of admission, the systematic depersonalization which goes with becoming a patient. One's own clothes are replaced by an anonymous white night gown; one's wrist is clasped by an identification bracelet with a number. One is no longer a free agent; one no longer has rights; one is no longer in the world at large. It is strictly analogous to becoming a prisoner, and

> humiliatingly reminiscent of one's first day at school. One is no longer a person - one is now an inmate (p. 46).

The experience of institutional alienation is also explored by bell hooks (1994) who felt that many of her under-graduate and graduate classes were rituals in control and domination rather than experiences of freedom and self-actualization. She found in her twenty years of teaching at the post-secondary level that many professors experienced "a grave sense of dis-ease" whenever students wanted to see them "as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply as seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge" (p. 15). She argues much of our educational experience is not directed toward wholeness but toward "the dualistic separation of public and private, encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of being, and the roles of professors" (p. 16) and students. Seeking to transgress this alienation, she looks to the work of Paulo Freire and Thich Nhat Hanh to help her construct a pedagogy which will reconnect mind, body and spirit, theory and practice, private and public in classrooms where every student is an active participant "striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (p. 15).

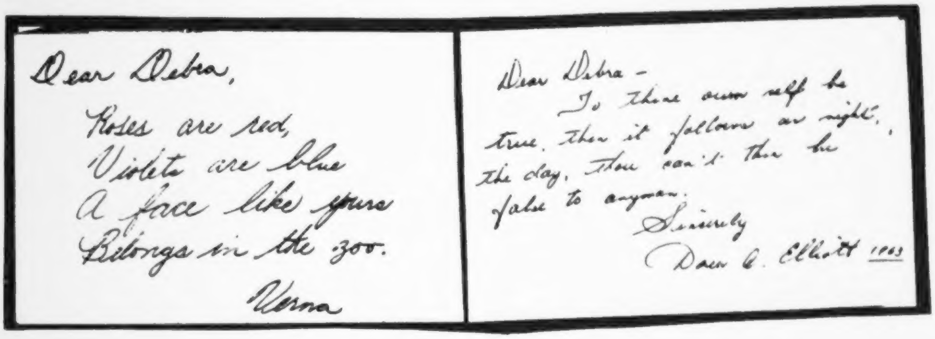
## .... Connections to the world

*A little girl sat on her back steps after the rain looking at the beautiful green grass, the newly polished sunshine and the rainbow that stretched across the sky. It was so beautiful. As she sat there, she wished she could write a poem to capture what she felt at that moment, a poem like the ones that were in the little book of POEMS her grade five teacher had given to her. She loved poetry, but the poems she tried to write were dreadful, just stupid rhymes that didn't say anything real about the world, or her feelings or what she knew.*

> *. . . . The weight of my body as I am placed face down into my mattress and admonished to go to sleep, like a good girl, pulls me into myself as does the memory which has suddenly surfaced so many decades later. I peered out between the bars of my crib. "Why can't I just go to sleep?" I wondered. It would be so much*

*easier for both of us if I could just do what I was supposed to do . . . .*

*But when she was twelve years old, an inscription in the midst of the mediocrity which permeated her autograph book captured her attention and called to her heart.*



Dear Debra,

Roses are red,
Violets are blue
A face like yours
Belongs in the zoo.

Verna

Dear Debra -
To thine own self be true, then it follows as night, the day, thou can't then be false to anyman.
Sincerely
Dawn A. Elliott 1963

**Figure 2. Reproduction of two pages of Debra's autograph book.**

> **"This above all; to thine ownself be true; and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to anyman" (Shakespeare, Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 78 - 80, Hamlet).**

*She wondered why the image of the pure, clear light of the burning candle always came to mind when she thought about being true to herself. She was not able to put into words what she had intuitively come to know, but as these images were juxtaposed in her thinking her ongoing journey of self reflection, reflexive thinking[3] and poetic expression began.*

*And years later, that same girl, now a teacher, sat in a university class discussing De Beaugrande's (1979) idea of how to teach students to write like Shakespeare. De Beaugrande proposed if Shakespeare's work could be reduced to a formula, students would be able to recombine the parts and write poetry like the master. But she knew he was wrong. She knew writing poetry was more than making rhymes and she knew that teaching children to write was more than supplying a formula or telling them how to do it right.*

---

[3] Steier (1991a,b) distinguishes between the terms reflective "(showing ourselves to ourselves)" and reflexive "(being conscious of ourselves as we see ourselves)" (p. 5). He also speaks of a reflexive loop which includes an inquirer who is also an active observer and suggests that "reflexivity, or a turning back onto a self, is a way in which circularity and self-reference appear in inquiry, as we contextually recognize the various mutual relationships in which our knowing activities are embedded" (p. 163).

**.... My apologies sire, but this lady doth protest**

With tongue in cheek
And voice so meek
I pen this reprimand
To one who shows
Just what He knows -
That villain De Beaugrande.

First impressions often lead
To simplistic declarations
But prolonged thoughts
Of no account
Yield absurd explanations.

Invention can
Not be reduced
To prescribed operations
And genius will not be produced
Through mere recombinations.

A precious stone is valuable
Because it's pure and rare
And artificial jewellry
Can never quite compare.

Carbon doth not yet appear
In all its radiant glory
Nor doth the villain in this tale
Recount the telling story.

The cataclysmic moment forms
A diamond in the rough
And insight can not be produced
Unless there is enough
Adversity, diversity, proximity or pain
To sear the heart
And free the mind
New brilliance to obtain.

Then, how experience is revealed,
- Through cut and polished stone -
Provides us with a monument
To genius alone.
(Schroeder, 1988a)

## .... Flickering lights

*As time passed, the image of the candle I had seen as a child merged with the candle I now saw shining brightly in another little girl, a little girl who would all too soon sit off to one side at school while her mother watched her smile fade and her light dim as it blended with a mother's tears into a kaleidoscopic image of flickering lights. Flickering lights, as I came to know again and again in my first years of teaching in a grade one class, which required patience, kindness, wisdom and love if they were going to learn to shine in this world.*

*Joel was one such child. He was being his normal mischievous self when his behaviour attracted my attention and I told him rather sharply to sit down, quit talking and get to work before I got cross. However, not expecting to have much more effect on his effervescent behaviour than I usually did, I was surprised when he sat down and remained quiet for what seemed like a very long time. In fact, I was at the point of wondering whether I should be pleased with the effectiveness of my request or concerned about his silence, when, as if sensing my thoughts, he came up to my desk. There, with unshed tears shining in his eyes, he told me in a very solemn and brave voice that the lights in our classroom were sparkling just like the street lights had the night before when his grandma had got mad at him and he had cried in her car.*

*As Joel spoke, I saw the lights in my classroom flicker too. His feelings of vulnerability evoked echoes from my past and his message of disconnection mirrored the experience of another little girl I knew so well. I began to wonder if shining in my small corner was connected to caring for these little lights. I began to probe the interrelatedness of teaching as leading - leading students into learning and into a future they could face with anticipation and confidence, and teaching as caring - caring for each child and caring about each child's learning and development of self.*

Reflective Turn: In seeking to understand the pedagogical experience, what it means to be a teacher, van Manen (1991) writes that "the original Greek idea of pedagogy has associated with it the meaning of leading in the sense of accompanying the child and living with the child in such a way as to provide direction and care for his or her life" (p. 38). He suggests that "schools too need to offer young people a caring and supportive environment, not only because caring teachers and caring schools tend to reproduce a caring orientation in the students themselves, but also because a caring school climate sponsors the conditions for personal growth itself" (pp. 34, 35) and states that "pedagogy, our care for our children, often requires of us active political involvement to create the space, conditions, and possibilities for children to grow up and create a world of their own making" (p. 212).

### .... Lead the way

I wanted to share my thought with you
But you marked them up with red and blue.
I thought you cared what I had to say
But you saw my errors and they got in the way
        In the way of my sharing
        In the way of your caring
Were mistakes that the two of us made.

I wanted to learn, develop and grow
But you in your wisdom wanted to show
Me all the places I'd gone astray
For you'd been there before and you knew the way
        Knew the way of all growing
        Knew the way to be showing
Knew the way to correct and to grade.

I wanted your comments, caring, advice
But you thought a grade would quite suffice.
You passed by a moment for teaching today
When you failed by your methods to lead the way
        Lead the way without spurning
        Lead the way into learning
                Lead the way
                        Lead the way
                                Lead the way.
                                (Schroeder, 1985b).

Reflective Turn: bell hooks (1994, p. 11), has said that

> Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage 'audiences,' to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning.

As I reflected on my personal experiences and my teaching experiences, I came to situate and understand my knowledge and practice of teaching in the space and time of a reflexive loop which encompassed both the personal and the professional, what Grumet has called "a hermeneutic circle of the soul, ever enlarging its self-story" (1991, p. 71), and to acknowledge the political context in which both the personal and the professional were embedded. Following the trajectory of my experience, I realized my actions, which had been directed toward creating a middle space for myself and for my students before I had even named it, were not going to change the world outside my classroom walls if I remained isolated in my small corner. I began to probe the social construction of knowledge, oppression, freedom and professional and political activism.

## PART II.
## THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

### .... Changing our landscapes

If I wanted to change the "educational landscape" (Martin, 1994) of my classroom, I needed to understand the larger educational landscape it was embedded in, a landscape fashioned out of an ideology of disconnection and objectivity, a landscape designed to move one away from the personal toward the public, from the specific to the generalizable. Martin's story of her two meetings with a young woman, a graduate student, laced with reflections on the writing of Virginia Woolf, resonated with stories I had known, helped me understand the landscape of the stories I was reconstructing. Let me share.

> Deciding on the soup, I settled in to watch the young woman across from me devour a hearty meal. "I have been wanting to tell you about the discovery I made," she said between bites. "You will not know his name, but in my country he is a famous man. And what do you think? I just discovered that he wrote a long treatise on women's education and I am going to do my dissertation on it. I wish I could describe to you how I feel. There I was in a closet where everything was dark. . . . And then, suddenly, everything became lit up. . . and now I can find my way out. You can not imagine what a wonderful feeling it is. I'm going to see my advisor this afternoon and tell him". . . .
>
> . . . .This can not be the person I lunched with earlier I thought to myself when I entered the cave (for the second time that day) and spied a young woman sitting in a dark corner staring vacantly ahead. . . . I sat down opposite her and waited to hear what the Beadle's successor had said. "Was your mentor as pleased as we were?" Never once looking from the small paper napkin she was tearing into bits, she told me the saga of that afternoon. . . .While I was searching the library shelves. . . . the tweedy man turned out the light. . . . It was not possible for him to direct work on such a narrow topic. . . . "He's right, you know. The general picture is what counts and I can always write about women later on, if I want. The only trouble is that when I sat down to wait for you, everything turned dark again" (Martin, 1994, pp. 124 - 126).

And with Martin, I could say, "The aims of education, the structure of curriculum and its underlying assumptions, the boundaries this culture has drawn between home and school and also home and world: these would be my concerns" (p. 9).

For while it is my goal as a teacher to catch the light shining in each child and reflect it like rainbows down the pathways they will travel, I have learned from Joel, and from Stephen and from my own children whose experiences are blended with those of so many others in my poetry and stories that a multiplicity of influences outside the world of my classroom directly and indirectly provide the context for the curriculum that is lived out and the stories that are told in my classroom. While many of these influences are known to me, other unconscious and unarticulated stories, referred to by Crites (1971) as sacred stories create the place from which I can see, and form the foundation of those invisible glass walls which surround my classroom and divide the private and the public, the personal and the political, the self and the other.

### .... The school of hard knocks

You've got to live in the real world
as the adults like to say,
You've got to live in the real world
so you might as well start today.
A little girl went to school today
a smile on her innocent face
She shared her charm in a special way
and her sunshine brightened the place.
You'll just have to learn that reality's grim
the sooner the better for you.
You're far from the top - the future's dim
and there's not much that you can do.
She talked to the boy right behind her
then she whispered across the aisle
With so much to learn she just wasn't sure
and needed support for awhile.
In your home you may have had value
in your home you may have had worth,
But the places that's true are very few
So you'd better come down to earth.
Then she'd learned she couldn't quite make it
that her answers were never right,
So rather than try and fail she quit
and her smile was hidden from sight.
They had thought they could help her to grow,
to take the hard knocks on the chin
But greatly mistaken - they didn't know -
they'd planned it so she couldn't win.
(Schroeder, 1988c)

As I began to listen attentively to the stories behind the stories I was telling, my consciousness of the sacred stories which supported these invisible walls increased. So, many years later, when a four year old boy came to school one Monday morning, "with a smile on his face and excitement shining out of his big blue eyes. . . and maybe just the slightest bit of apprehension in his heart," I could identify with both his sense of wonder and his feelings of fear. I knew from personal experience that he might remember what happened to him on this day for a very long time and I did not want to do anything to "dim the excitement" of school or the light that was shining in him.

### .... *Stephen's story*

*Stephen came to school on Monday. He came with his father who had work to do there that day. He came with a lot of anticipation and maybe just the slightest bit of apprehension in his heart. I know, because I saw him coming.*

*He came bouncing down the hall so full of life, so eager, so overjoyed at his good fortune, and ran right into me with all his thoughts and feelings and hopes spilling out of his eyes, his actions, and his words. Here he was only four years old, but he was in school and it was easy to see that his joy was complete when he saw me and proudly announced: I came to school!"*

*Stephen came to school on Monday. He came into my classroom for song and story time while his father worked. He sat on the carpet with the other children. He listened to the singing. He listened and he watched me while all of the other children watched him.*

*They watched him squirm with excitement. They watched him as he jumped up in the middle of a song to delightedly proclaim that the song we were singing was a favourite on Mr. Dress-Up too. Then they watched me. They watched me to see what I was going to do. They watched me and they listened to what I would have to say about this interruption. They watched and they listened and they waited....*

*But I did not say anything. I did not say to Stephen that on the carpet we sit with our legs crossed and our hands in our laps. I did not say to Stephen that we do not interrupt a song or story to share our most profound discoveries or to reveal our uncontainable joy. I did not say anything, because I could not bear to be the one who dimmed his excitement or dampened his enthusiasm.*

*....But they watched me and they knew. They knew that Stephen had broken our carpet rules. They knew that I should say something to him, but they also knew that I was not going to and that I did not want them to say anything either. So their singing - which had faltered - resumed, and they*

*watched me from eyes suddenly older and more experienced.*

*They watched me from eyes that acknowledged both their understanding of my dilemma and their own passage from carefree childhood into the new world of school. They watched me, and they watched Stephen from a new perspective. They watched him until his father came to take him home.*

*Stephen left school then. He left it knowing that school is a good place to be; but he left me sadder. He left me sadder than I could have been before I had seen him that Monday morning....so full of life, so eager, so proud that he was old enough to come to school, so happy to come with me into my classroom, and so close to losing his trust, his hope, his enthusiasm, and his excitement on his very first day in school (Schroeder, 1989a).*[4]

Reflective Turn: "The episode as lived has passed; the text as written lives. Thus the qualitative is used in two senses. The first is the ability to experience a particular state of affairs; to grasp how it was. The second is its representation. . ." (Eisner, 1991, p. 21). Eisner has suggested that one of the most useful aspects of qualitative inquiry lies in its literary representation which allows "writers to transform their own experience into a public form called text" (p. 22). This written representation of experience is set within a frame that "seeks a deeper reading of the word and the world" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 1), through remembrance of descriptive detail and consuming emotion, in stories that "are twice as true as life" (Welty, 1979, p. 127).

Stephen is just one child. Just one of the many children who enter into my room every year. Not even one of my "real" students. Just a visitor. So why then, does his story still bring tears to my eyes and tightness to my chest years after I was compelled to record it? What is it about this experience that evokes within me all the hope and possibility I felt when I first became a teacher even as it provokes me to withdraw from teaching in despair? I believe I did the right thing with Stephen that day, that I responded to him in a caring way (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). He left school happy, so why am I crying? I want to know.

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[4] Stephen's story (Schroeder, 1989a) was first published under the title, *Rites of Passage.*

## .... That which is concealed

> It is the function of art to reorganize experience so it is perceived freshly. At the very least, the painting, the poem, or the play cleanses a familiar scene, washing away the film of habit and dust collected over time so that it is seen anew. When it is most radical, the work of art draws the viewer to it, engaging expectations, memories, recognitions, and simultaneously interrupts the viewer's customary response, contradicting expectations with new possibilities, violating memories, displacing recognition with estrangement (Grumet, 1988, p.81).

If I am to see more clearly, it is the habit of time that must be disrupted, it is the dust of expectation that must be lifted. If I am to know anew, it is my response that must be questioned, it is my story that must be retold. And so, reflecting once more upon this story of personal experience I wonder, is it possible that my tears are not just for Stephen? Is it possible that my story captured more of my lived experience than I had initially thought, that the dilemma it represents is something I need to attend to more closely? Have I, to this time, focused so exclusively on the figure of Stephen in this picture that I have neglected the ground he is standing upon? The ground not only of the classroom floor, but of the other children seated there. The children who listen but who do not speak. The children who sit but who do not jump. The children who watch but who do not initiate. The children who wait and wait and wait while the figure of Stephen and the theory of curriculum, which invisibly order the world of school, keep me from seeing what is in front of my eyes. Have I, as Husserl (1982) warned, turned so completely toward one object, that I have been unable to apprehend that space which surrounds it? Have I missed seeing the children who sit so closely spaced on the carpet every day when it is song and story time, the children who stay when Stephen leaves, is it something in their experience which makes me sad?

Might there be a window of hope in my story of Stephen? I must draw nearer if I am to see more clearly, if I am to understand more fully. What is it about this picture that draws me in, even as I long to shut it out - out of my mind and out of my heart? What is it about this story that can help me know and understand the world of school, that can inform my relationship with my students, that can enlighten my teaching practice? If it is this familiar scene that is causing my discomfort, why do I do nothing about it? I am the teacher and they are all watching. They are all waiting. They are all watching and waiting for me to decide what will happen. "This is your space," their eyes seem to say. "We can't go home. Our mothers and fathers aren't coming for us. We have to stay in this space called school." I want to escape. Yet I am held fast, mesmerized by the silence of the children with no voices, pulled by a responsibility to act on behalf of the children with no escape. "You don't understand," I silently plead, "I wish you had as much space to be and become as Stephen has." And as other teachers and authors have attested (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Greene, 1988; Grumet, 1988; van Manen, 1991), I am not alone in that desire. "....Spaces have to be opened in the schools and around the schools; the windows have to let in the fresh air" (Greene, 1988, p.134). There needs to be "a link between the spaces within and without, an opening in the wall....a door by which (one) can leave and a window through which (one) can at least see the world outside" (Bollnow, 1961). Openings have to be "cleared for students' voices - space in which students' own particular histories and forms of knowledge are recognized and respected" (Edgerton, 1991, p. 79). I want to open the windows and unlock the doors. But they are so heavy.

Reflective Turn: In the book *Awakenings*, Sacks (1990) offers a description of Mount Carmel, the institution which houses his patients. Not only have the once pleasant surroundings disappeared over the years as the hospital expanded from forty to one thousand beds, but as he says:

> Sadder, and more serious, has been the change in its character, the insidious deterioration in atmosphere and care. . . . The hospital has assumed somewhat the aspect of a fortress or prison, in its physical appearance and the way it is run. A strict administration has come into being, rigidly committed to 'efficiency' and rules; 'familiarity' with patients is strongly discouraged. Law and order have been ousting fellow-feeling and kinship; hierarchy separates the inmates from staff; and patients tend to feel they are 'inside,' unreachably distant from the real world outside (p. 25).

The character of this institution is a cause of great concern to Sacks because he sees a relationship between the innately coercive structure of the Parkinsonism, the disease which his patients have developed subsequent to contracting the sleeping sickness virus, and the rigorous institution which he perceives as an external neuroses; and an interrelationship between the coercive institution and its patients, in that such an institution calls forth and aggravates the coercions of its inmates. I wonder what my actions, my classroom and the institution of school are calling forth from my students.

### .... Prisms of knowledge:
### Reflections of light

I can dance far into tomorrow
with a song written in my heart
I can paint a beautiful picture
since nature's reflection is art
I can write an eloquent poem
if I have the words that I need
I can climb up a rugged mountain
when I have the faith to succeed.

But how can I sing you a song
that will live inside your soul,
How can I fill you with colors
you'll need to perceive the whole,
How can I surround you with words
to write in your own refrain,
How can I give you the tools
to traverse unknown terrain?

For I want you to dance upon rainbows-
and let them color your sight,
I want you to paint with sunshine-
as knowledge increases with light,
I want you to sing out your poems-
from heights I may never reach,
But your echo returns from the future. . .
"Then why isn't that what you teach?"
(Schroeder, 1988b)

"Please, don't ask me that," I whisper, and for the first time I begin to wonder if I am not crying as much for myself and the other teachers who live under the shadow of this question and with the constant struggle that it implies, as I am for the silent and powerless students who sit in frozen circles and rigid rows watching the world and waiting for permission to dance and paint and write and climb, waiting for permission to live in our classrooms, to feel at home and connected in the space of school.

### .... I'm ready, are you?

I'm ready to live
Ready to grow
Ready for all the love you show.
Ready for laughter-
Ready for fun-
Ready for life that's just begun.
Ready for touching
Ready to talk
Ready to crawl and climb and walk.
Ready for friends
Ready to play
Ready for new things everyday.
Ready to learn
Ready to know
Ready for school where I must go.

Are you ready for me?
Ready to see-
All the things that I can be?
Ready to meet me where I am?
Ready to teach me what you can?
Ready to guide?
Ready to lead?
Ready to help me to succeed?
Ready to challenge?
Ready to change?
Ready your world to rearrange?

I'm ready today - ready to do
So many things if you'll help me to.
Teacher, the time has come when you-
Must answer the question, "Are you ready too?"
(Schroeder, 1985a)

"Why are you asking me so many questions?", I long to scream. "I am only the teacher. I don't know all the answers. Can't you see that I also watch and wait? Don't you know that I also feel the wall? (Sartre, 1948). What makes you think I have the strength to push it down? What makes you think I have the voice to build anew? Why do you expect so much of me? How can I change this world? How can I make room for you? How can I make school your space, a space where you can come to know, a space for us with room for you?"

## PART III.
## WE SHALL NOT CEASE FROM EXPLORATION

### .... Constructing the question

And if I could, what would this space be? That is the question. The unspoken question, not found precipitously dangling at the end of some recent research but never-the-less, the question that permeates so many educational stories, so much pedagogical conversation, the question that brings us to the edge (Le Guin, 1989) even as it draws us to the centre. Grumet (1988), has envisioned that "A curriculum designed for my child is a conversation that leaves space for her responses, that is transformed by her questions" (p. 172) and states that "We need to re-create safe places, even in schools, where teachers can concentrate, can attend to their experience of children and of the world, and we need to create community spaces where the forms that express that experience are shared" (p. 90). She "invites us to refuse to run the classroom like a conveyance, designed to transport children from the private to the public world, but to make it instead a real space in the middle..." (p. 20).

I long to accept her invitation, but what is this "real space in the middle" the space where the private and the public meet in conversation? That is the question. The question that I am moved to ask not only out of a desire to reconstruct curriculum theory or to improve educational practice (important and necessary as those goals are) but the question which realizes significance in both its personal and professional relationship to me, the question which echoes in my heart and in my mind, the question that I want to answer for myself and for the students in my classroom, the personal question with its public, political and moral implications.

## .... On matters of significance

As an elementary teacher, I have long been concerned with the matter of space in the classroom and in the curriculum. I have long been concerned with the children who sit on my carpet. I have long been concerned with contradictions of curriculum theory and classroom reality, "with the problematic nature of the lived world" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 21). However, in my repeated attempts to create a middle ground, a space between the mandated curriculum and the lived world of children, between the school's expectations and the child's realizations, between society and self, a sacred space where we could all come together, I have been pulled in many directions. I have been involved in many conflicting experiences. I hear voices demanding that education be reduced to "the basics," or "student competency", or "teacher accountability" and "preparation for the business world"; but amidst these voices I hear others, admittedly more softly spoken but nevertheless equally compelling and morally significant, calling for the empowerment of "creative thinkers," or "problem solvers," or "collaborative caring citizens" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Eisner, 1991; Schon, 1983).

Caught in this "babble of voices" (Schon, 1983), in the time between past and future (Dewey, 1938), I struggle with the problem of providing a space that will allow students to develop the common learnings that our society expects, while I attempt to create the spaces that will allow them to become the enlightened and empowered individuals that our world needs. I struggle with the problem, while I listen to the stories of children. And caught within this medley of confusing and contradictory voices, I often feel compelled to educate children in ways I can not morally defend, in ways that leave me feeling uncomfortable and less than satisfied with my classroom role and relationships, in a way that makes little sense to me but which Eudora Welty must have understood when she wrote "our knowledge depends on the living relationship between what we see going on and ourselves" (1944, p. 156).

### .... Ambiguity

I wanted to be distanced
from the voices
But they would not abate
I could not avoid the problems
nor emotion they create
As I struggled with the tension
that had lodged inside of me
I could find no new perspective
Through my objectivity.
Knowledge was not found residing
in the pages of a book
It was in the teacher's story
It was in the children's look
It could not be separated
from a teacher who had cared
It was in her heart and memory
and the moments they had shared
(Schroeder, Unpublished)

If I wanted to know, if I wanted to make sense of my experiences, I could no longer discount my conflicting emotions or seek distance from my lived experience. I could no longer ignore the significance of my own voice and the voices of the students I taught (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1994b). I could no longer question the significance of the problem, while I lived with the reality of "Stephen's Story", while the students watched and waited. I could no longer doubt the significance of the knowledge that was in this private place, this sacred space of personal experience. I had to believe that "the moral contradictions and inconsistencies in our personal lives more than resonate with those in our social order, our nation's politics, our culture" (Coles, 1989, p. 203), that the moral dilemmas and competing imperatives (Halliwell, 1992) we face as professionals provide a context for understanding our personal experience and as such are of great significance for how we will live our lives together.

Reflective Turn: Oliver Sacks (1984) helps me to make connections between my personal experiences and the larger context my experience is placed in. He says:

> We speak, glibly of institutionalization, without the smallest personal sense of what is involved - how insidious, and universal, is the contradiction in all realms (not least the moral realm) and how swiftly it can happen to anyone, oneself. I had often spoken to my own patients, institutionalized for decades before their 'awakening' and asked them - Did they not feel terribly confined? Did they not yearn for the great world outside? And I would be amazed and incredulous when they quietly said 'No.' I could not see them all as pathological - and yet this complaisance seemed almost universal, and (it) retarded and obstructed their return to spaciousness and fullness of life, even when this had been rendered physically possible by L-DOPA. Now, I realized, such regression was universal. It would occur with any immobilization, illness, or confinement. It was an unavoidable, natural shrinking-down of existence, made both bearable and untreatable because not realizable - not directly realizable. How could one know that one had shrunk, if one's frame of reference had itself shrunk. One had to be reminded of the great world one had 'forgotten' - and then, only then, could one expand and be cured (p. 157).

## .... Preliminary explorations

Thirty spokes connect to the wheel's hub;
yet, it is the center hole
that makes it useful.
Clay is shaped into a vessel;
yet, it is the emptiness within
that makes it useful.
Doors and windows are cut for a room;
yet it is the space where there is nothing
that makes it useful....
Thus what we gain is Something,
yet it is by virtue of the Empty Spaces
that this can be put to use.
(McCarroll, 1982; Lau, 1989)

But what is this space of which I speak? Is it something, or is it nothing? Questions fill my mind and possibilities abound. However, I must remember that my preoccupation has not arisen out of a philosophical, mathematical or metaphysical desire to define space but rather out of a pedagogical desire to provide students with space for creative expression and personal response while simultaneously defining that space in such a way that I can remain a professionally responsible and responsive teacher (van Manen, 1991), in such a way that the students will not be locked in themselves (Taylor, 1991) but will be free to participate as members of a caring collaborative community (Greene, 1988; Noddings, 1984). My understanding of this space encompasses temporality, position, availability, ownership, responsibility, relationship, opportunity and possibility. It expands from the womb to the world, an umbilical connection never fully severed, even as it contracts from infinity to the lines on my day plan, to the children seated on my carpet.

In my life at school, I talk of leaving space and making space, structuring space and opening space. I worry that the prescribed curriculum does not allow enough space for either the teacher's or students' transformations and creative expressions, that school ignores the need for the private and the personal in favour of the public. I complain that my space has been invaded or that I am not being given enough space. I rebel against curriculum that divides my school space into subjects, domains and minutes, while my body divides it into inner and outer, private and public, sacred and mundane.

But what is this space? Is it an absence or a presence? Is it a tangible volume existing only by virtue of those visible or invisible boundaries that surround it, give it context and circumscribe its possibility? Or is it rather the illusion of no boundaries, the abyss at the edge of the world (Le Guin, l989) that points beyond itself to an unnamed possibility? Bollnow (1961, p. 31), laments the lack of reflective thought that has been given to the "spatial constitution of human life, or of concretely lived-space" and attempts to draw our attention to "the inner structure of space, as it appears concretely to man in his experience." His inquiry into this phenomenon proceeds from the observation that lived-space must be understood in relation to the person who perceives and moves in it. He proposes that "all live movement in space occurs as a going away or a coming back" (p. 32) to the space we feel "at home" in, to the inner sacred space, a space safe from the outer world, but nevertheless, a space from which we must depart if we are to participate in the public world, if we are to assume our complete humanity. Is school a space we feel "at home" in? Is there a sacred space in the world of school, a space our students can depart from, a space which will ensure the development of their true humanity?

Who owns the space of school? Whose names are on the deed? Is any of this space mine, or am I only the guardian of the space I am in, gatekeeper at the intersection of personal ideals and social issues? As a person entrusted by society to assume control over the space named school, how much, if any, of this control or space can I release to my students? How wide can I open the windows and still keep them here? On the other hand, if I want my students to assume ownership for their learning and regard school and education as relevant to their own lived experience, if I want them to dance and write and paint and climb, if I want them to become more enlightened and empowered individuals, how much of their physical, cognitive, affective, creative and sacred space can I control? How tightly can I lock the doors and still hope that that which remains within my grasp is something worth holding on to? I wonder, is the space that I experience not space at all, but rather freedom, freedom to act or freedom from intrusive control? (Greene, 1988). On each dimension, I experience the dilemma. In each space, I ask the question - the question that has significance for society, for education, for curriculum, for me and for the children I teach.

## .... The scope of this inquiry

Four general questions were proposed to guide this research but each of these broader questions quickly subsumed many more. The raison d'etre of our research group was to explore and collaboratively construct the concept of middle space. Closely related to the many queries which arose out of our attempts to do this, were questions about the personal and professional dilemmas teachers faced in trying to create a middle space with the students in their classrooms. As this research was based on a constructivist epistemology, we were also committed to asking questions about the social construction of knowledge in our research group. And finally, but connected to the social construction of knowledge, we wanted to question the developmental aspects of research and to make links between our storytelling group, constructivism and teachers' professional development.

I hoped, through the process of narrative inquiry, we could conversationally explore the experiences of classroom teachers who were attempting to create a "middle space", a "sacred space", a "window of hope", in the public place we call school. Within and through this exploration, I also hoped we could begin to understand not only what middle space is, but what this space could become in the creation of a classroom community, in the lives of individual children, and in the experiences of practicing teachers. I suspected that because of the constructivist nature of the questions there would be no single story, no magic answers, no ready made curriculum; and it was in that hope I found the courage to begin these explorations and conversations.

In that hope, the hope of infinite possibility, I found a middle space in which I could begin, a public space with room for my personal story to inform the world of curriculum theory not to lead to the development of those new structures which offer possibility for change but which ultimately remain impervious to the voices of those who live inside, which too soon "look at the window rather than through it" as promise "collapses into prescription" (Grumet, 1988, p. xiii) or to achieve narrative unity and closure, but to create questions for continuing conversation, open spaces for new understanding, point to stories untold and threads unwoven (Willinsky, 1989), and "leave the dialogue open" (Stacey, 1991, p. 117).

Through stories told and retold, I wanted to make connections and to ask: How can we open up the classroom and the curriculum to provide windows for a private and public self to develop, for the private to become public and the public private? How can we open up the classroom doors to connected and constructed knowing? Is this ability dependent upon the teacher's own experience of space in her past and present school context? Is it related to the teacher's conception of curriculum and knowledge? Is it influenced by the teacher's need to express his or her own personal or creative potential in the classroom? What are the life experiences of the teacher who would attempt to create such a space in the structure of school?

Reflective Turn: Reading *Chaos* by James Gleick (1987) after writing my research proposal increased not only the questions I initially asked about middle space but increased the possibilities of what we might construct it to mean. New ways of restorying our experiences and understanding the middle space are presented as we consider what "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" might mean. What initial conditions frame our educational experiences and what unpredictability and hence possibility are embedded in a middle space thus defined? How will our understanding of chaos theory help us imagine educational research in ways different than those implicit in traditional scientific notions of truth, predictability and control? Gleick has said,

> WHERE CHAOS BEGINS, classical science stops. . . .Chaos is a science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being. Now that science is looking, chaos seems to be everywhere. . . .No matter what the medium, the behavior obeys the same newly discovered laws. That realization has begun to change the way business executives make decisions about insurance, the way astronomers look at the solar system, the way political theorists talk about the stresses leading to armed conflict. Chaos breaks across the lines that separate scientific disciplines. . . . Chaos poses problems that defy accepted ways of working in science. . . .The first chaos theorists, the scientists who set the discipline in motion, shared certain sensibilities. They had an eye for pattern, especially pattern that appeared on different scales at the same time. They had a taste for randomness and complexity, for jagged edges and sudden leaps. . . .They feel that they are turning back a trend in science toward reductionism. . . and eliminating the Laplacian fantasy of deterministic predictability" (pp. 6 - 7).

Although the initial questions which guided this research were numerous, I expected that as we engaged in this "search to know" they would continue to multiply, for as Coles (1989, p. 129) has reminded us "the whole point of stories is not 'solutions' or 'resolutions' but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles." I was not disappointed in this respect. It is this broadening and heightening of struggles that I seek, as my interest is not in answering these many questions specifically, but in exploring the classroom teachers' experience of curriculum as space, in listening to the classroom teachers' stories of the children they teach; the stories that exist because of the teachers' personal and responsible connection with the world (Welty, 1979, p. 46); the stories that speak with the voice of an individual "bound up in the local, the 'real,' the present, the ordinary day-to day of human experience (Welty, 1979, p. 117); the story "that comes out of human life and leads back into human life" (Welty, 1979, p. 58). For in keeping with the writing of Eudora Welty, "who could assess the moral and ethical dimension of place", and who "could create a context in which the universal was subtly evoked in the clarity of the particular" (Kincheloe, & Pinar, 1991, p. 7); or Eisner (1991), who explored the use of the "concrete universal" in our ability to make generalizations; I too expect, that in the telling of each teacher's personal stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1994b) is the knowledge that will link curriculum theory to social and moral concerns, to classroom practice and student experience. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the understanding that will open the windows, and the key that will unlock the doors. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the community who will gather 'round to listen, inquire and reflect, and the collective strength that will open the spaces. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories in a response-filled community is the space to hope.

# PART IV
# TO ARRIVE BACK WHERE WE STARTED

## .... Reflexive constructivism

The middle space, I have created for myself in order to come to know what I know about myself and my teaching practice and to understand how I construct the middle space in my classroom, is an autobiographical space. It offers not only the possibility for writing and telling my own life, for connecting my past, present and future, for reflecting upon and revisiting times and places that gave meaning to my life and that make my life meaningful; but for constructing and reconstructing the questions I wish to research. The autobiographical provides a context for the questions I have constructed out of my life and for the features from this life (and subsequently from the participants' stories) which I have selected as worthy of exploration and presentation, the ones I have chosen because of the personal and professional significance they have for me with roots hidden in my life as well as in my data.

As a researcher, I am accountable for the choices I make in planning, facilitating and presenting the research story. In choosing to write an autobiographical introduction, I have attempted to situate this research project in my life; and through the stories I have chosen to tell, I have attempted to situate my life in the research process. Like the faces in the wine glass, the figure and the ground can shift, but the choice of what to focus on is mine. But although I am accountable, I do not see this autobiographical account as providing justification or explanation for the choices I have made. I have shared them so that the reader, will know that what I find is what I have at this particular time and place constructed out of the infinite possibilities that were available. In this middle space, this autobiographical space, I can name myself and construct my knowledge and my world. My purpose is not to tell just one story or one true story, or to present the authorized version but to provide a context for retelling and revisioning both the past and the present. In this way, the middle space, I have created is also a reflexive space.

But while I have found both personal and professional middle space within the autobiographical, I have not worked alone. The middle space I speak of is a constructivist space. Within this research project, the middle space has been socially constructed just as the "I" in the research conversation and stories has been constructed in relationship with the teachers in the research group.

This research group included four elementary school teacher-researchers who met for supper, conversation and collaborative storytelling every two weeks for five months in the living room of my apartment and myself, a researcher, teacher and the narrator of our research story. Although we had many discussions about naming ourselves in the research story, it was not until each teacher received the final research text that the personal decision to use her own name or a pseudonym was made. Margaret and Anne chose to use their real names, while Kelly and Lisa chose to use pseudonyms.

Our teaching experience extended from kindergarten to grade six and included both regular and special education placements. Lisa had completed a master's degree before the study began and returned to the classroom as a teacher as the study commenced. She had had prior experience as a vice-principal and is currently the principal of an elementary school. Kelly and I were doctoral students during the study. Kelly was also teaching school part time and working as a practicum advisor. She has since stopped teaching in the school system and is completing her own dissertation. I was on sabbatical leave at the time our group met, but have since returned to a position as an elementary teacher. I have completed the writing of our research story between the lines and in the margins. Margaret, who was teaching during our research meetings, is currently on educational leave and is enrolled in a master's program. Anne, who had moved from Saskatchewan to Alberta in order for her husband to pursue a Ph.D., was not teaching at the time of the study. She has now been a "stay at home mom" for three years. Her plans to consider pursuing her own education were interrupted this fall as she and her husband moved back to Nova Scotia.

The taped conversations from these meetings, the research journal, and our subsequent reflections, stories, letters and conversations which have continued during the past two years have all become part of the research data, the interpretation and the story of this collaborative inquiry into the curriculum of middle space.

### .... Middle space in retrospect

Transcripts:[5] (pp. 16 - 19 )

K. When Debbie was talking I couldn't help thinking about the retroflective nature of the middle space we want to create in our classrooms. It's all retro -- it's the process of going back over the past isn't it? I was in school - I went through the school system myself - yet, as a child I had no awareness about any of this. It was just there. It was not in theory. When I went into university perhaps it was talked about a little bit, but more as control and behaviour management. But now as I'm looking back I see it was not until I was given a gift - the special education class that I call my gift - that I really started to create space, comfortable space for myself and the children in my classroom. And where did the knowledge to create that space come from? It grew not out of my school experiences which had not provided me with middle space nor my university courses, but from the comfortable spaces that I had had in my home life.

M. But I think the sources of our ability to imagine and create a middle space depends on the kinds of experiences we have had. I had some experiences in school that were not great and I grew up being aware of ways I would not act if I were the teacher. I think if you have lived through many years when your schooling is not comfortable you may have reflected more on the experience of schooling and on the things that kept you from experiencing the middle space.

L. However, I can remember several teachers who were quite freeing particularly in junior high. From about grade six to grade nine, there were some key individuals who I remember. I also remember school was fun and I remember it was hard. I mean we worked hard and I remember coming home and being really tired from what we had done. We had done a lot, we had built and we had talked and read but I don't know how these teachers achieved that effect. (laughter) I can't remember that far back. I just remember loving what they did to the point where I made decisions later on in my life based on those experiences. For instance, I wanted to travel to the places that we talked about in grade seven and I did. I wrote about the effect of these experiences on my life in my own thesis.

My grade seven teacher, who was also the principal, was a very kind quiet man and a brilliant speaker. I could have listened to him all day but he didn't talk much. He read a lot to us and he was a beautiful reader. He would turn the lights out and read and read for a long time. I remember painting images in my mind. He would talk a little bit and then we would read stories about Pompeii and about ancient history and we would choose projects to do related to that era, anything we wanted, I think. That is my memory. I also remember writing poems and making castles and doing drama. We did a lot of drama. And I said, "I'm going to Europe. As soon as I'm old enough I'm going to Europe because I have to see what it is like." So at seventeen I went to Europe. I didn't get as far as I wanted to go but I saw and lived some wonderful things. And I can trace it back to that time, to that year, to that teacher.

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[5] The transcripts which appear in the text of this thesis have been taken from the transcribed and rewritten conversations of our research group. The four teacher-researchers in this collaborative storytelling group were Margaret, Anne, Lisa and Kelly. Speakers' names in the transcripts have been abbreviated to initials. I am referred to as Debbie by the participants and as D. in the transcripts. Names of all students have been changed to protect their anonymity as have those of some other characters in our stories.

D. As a student, did you have the feeling of a middle space? What would you call the feeling you had?

L. Excitement! And I remember a lot of sharing. I worked with other people, all the projects I can remember were group projects. We also did a lot at home. Even though I'd had a very traditional education up to that point, it didn't feel foreign or like the chains were off. I just remember being excited about going to school. I was open to learning.

Reflective Turn: In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks speaks of the excitement she felt as an elementary student in an all black school. Taught by black women who were committed to resisting the white racist strategies of colonization, she felt ecstasy and passion in, and for, learning which was defined as the practice of freedom. Contrasting this experience with her time spent in desegregated schools intended to foster the integration of blacks into mainstream culture, she learned "the difference between education as the individual and collective practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination", education meant to teach students "obedience to authority" (p. 4). hooks names her experience in elementary school the first paradigm and speaks to the way this experience shaped her own practice as a teacher. She identifies many subsequent experiences in school and university as mis-educative, although through them she learned what kind of a teacher she did not want to become. But as a teacher in the institutes of higher education, where she desired to share her excitement and to encourage excitement and joy in her students she came to know her teaching as transgressing because it required movement beyond accepted boundaries and could not be generated without the recognition "that there could never be an absolute set agenda governing teaching practices. Agendas had to be flexible, had to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction. Students had to be seen in their particularity as individuals. . . and interacted with according to their needs" (p. 7) in a classroom community where everyone's presence was acknowledged and valued.

K. But when I think of being in grade one and getting the strap, (gasp) I can see why I closed myself off for a very long time. However, you're talking about grade seven. When I was in grade seven I knew myself and I knew about space. If the teacher did not respect me I was able to think, "Well this is just this teacher!" But when you're a grade one student you want to love your teacher and if that doesn't happen you can't externalize the problem. I remember thinking there was something wrong with me. I closed myself off and I thought, "I'm a bad person." At least when you're older you can create a different kind of space in your mind if the space in the classroom is not nurturing, but little kids don't have that luxury. They, as I remember, internalize the negative interactions and feel badly about themselves. . . .

. . . . You're nodding your head!

### .... It's where my thoughts are now

A. What you're saying reminds me of a story I'm writing about my son Thomas. Thomas is three years old and in playschool, which isn't really school I know, but it's where my thoughts are right now.

*As I dropped my son, Thomas, at playschool today I was reminded of the importance of the caring element of classrooms. Thomas did not want me to leave him. He was pretty upset and I, at the other end of the action this time, felt pretty ambiguous as to the right thing to do. As a teacher, before having a child myself, it had always seemed quite easy to assure the parents of a crying child that things would be fine once they left, that their child would settle in. It's so easy when you're not a parent yourself - at least for me it was. I know now how those parents felt. I also think I have more of a window on how the child felt.*

*Thomas is really afraid I won't come back. This has been ongoing since Christmas and I don't know what to do. I should know what to do because I was exactly the same way as a child myself. But I don't. I think that teachers, like many parents, expect to find solutions to problems very easily. When these are not forthcoming we feel like failures. I wonder, should I withdraw him from playschool? But he loved it before Christmas, and I need time on my own, and he can't have my undivided attention all day, every day.*

*I think that at school I was aware, though not consciously, of the importance of that caring dimension. It was a part of the middle space of classrooms for me. Yet perhaps, I didn't appreciate it fully enough. Seeing a child grow from a baby to a preschooler, to an elementary school aged child gives one a real sense of the need to respect the child - not to charge in with* *one's own agenda. It opens one up to listen to the child's concerns and dilemmas and to consider them as equally valid and pressing as one's own.*

*When you were talking about when you were a child it made me think that teachers often think that that little boy or girl can accept what they are doling out with adult maturity but it just isn't that way. I feel in my earlier years of teaching I didn't realize how the little things I said meant so much. I feel now like I wish I could do them over again.*

### .... Making connections through our reflections

Transcripts: (pp. 42 - 43)
L. I met the mother of one of my students, a very thoughtful girl and a brilliant writer, the other day. I went to visit her just to say, "Hello, I'm the new teacher." During this visit she told me about a disturbing incident involving her daughter on the playground at school. She was out playing when a boy hit her. She yelled and called him a pelican. Later she said she didn't know why she had picked this word and figured it had actually been more funny than bad until a teacher screamed at her for using that kind of language. As I thought about this story, the teacher's reaction seemed inappropriate and I couldn't believe that someone with children of her own would not show more understanding of the child's feelings and tolerance for her actions in this situation. But it also made me realize that sensitivity to children's feelings can be there whether you're a parent or not and that you're not guaranteed sensitivity as a teacher just because you are a parent.
D. When Kelly told us about getting the strap in grade one and Anne read her story about her little boy and Lisa told us about her student's playground experience, I thought about an experience I'd had in grade one.

*It happened soon after I started school. I had stayed at school for lunch for the first time. When we went outside to play, a very large boy purposely ran into me, knocked me down and knocked the wind out of me. After I could breathe again, I ran to my home which was near the school to get cleaned up. My mom washed me, changed me into my favourite pink flared skirt and matching blouse, gave me a kiss and sent me running back to school reassured and happy. On the way back I met my good friend Cathy who had been sent to come and get me. We arrived a little late and entered the class after story time had begun but I snuggled into my seat, happy to be back in school which I loved. The teacher, who did not inquire into what had sent me running to the sanctuary of my home, was not happy at my reappearance and scolded me in front of the class for not only doing such a terrible thing -going home without permission- but for making Cathy miss part of the story. She never asked why I went home. She never asked if I knew about a rule that said you couldn't go home if you stayed at school for lunch. She never gave any thought to my feelings or to my humiliation on the playground or in the* *classroom. All of her energy was expended in upholding a rule which she obviously cared about more than she cared about me.*

*I'm sure that after that day she never spent another minute thinking about this incident, but I never again wore that pink flared skirt and matching striped blouse with the pockets that buttoned down without remembering. Although painful, and never forgotten, this incident has no doubt influenced my own relationships with children.*

D. This conversation is helping me think about sensitivity and the ethical implications of our responses. The teacher's response is so critical to the meaning and the memories the child constructs. I think memories of your own childhood, can be very powerful in shaping your present actions and interactions. You can reconstruct and understand the child's perspective and feelings as much through reflecting on your own experiences as a child as you can through you watching your own children.
L. In doing this, I like to bring in the enriching experiences too, like that grade seven teacher I had, because that felt so good and I can remember that feeling. I hope that, because I know how good it felt (mmhmm) to be excited and included in the learning process, I can help my students feel that way too.

### .... The shape of middle space

Transcripts: (p. 358)
A. When we talk about the things that we remember from school it really shows how important that middle space is. That's what people remember and what shapes them, not the curriculum.
M. That's true isn't it? That's what we're remembering.

Transcripts: (pp. 207 - 208)
K. But getting back to what you said before Debbie, are we deluding ourselves when we think the spaces we see as middle spaces are also perceived by our students as middle spaces? I used to wonder about that a lot in my teaching. I think I continually thought about the way I felt in school. I always did. At home I felt I was respected for what my teachers often thought was outrageous behaviour. I was an actress. I was an artist. In my grandmother's eyes I was wonderful and that's the way I was at home. But when I went to school I was expected to be Miss Priss. When I started teaching I thought about my own experiences all the time and I wondered if there was a way I could make this schooling experience more comfortable for each individual student because I remembered those feelings of not wanting to go to school, of not belonging, and of school not being at all like the good space at home.
L. And not being able to leave. You have to go.
K. And being trapped. I wrote an autobiographical piece about being trapped in the experience of an education. That's the way I felt and writing about it was

therapeutic and important to me as a teacher. I used to try to reflect on those feelings all the time. That's why it broke my heart when I saw or heard my teaching partner doing what I considered to be destructive things with children. I couldn't live with it. I really couldn't, and I'm sure the reason it was so important to me was because of my own experiences. I don't know what I would have been like as a teacher if I'd really enjoyed myself in school. Maybe it would have been different, but I have to say that I've really thought a whole lot - all the time - about making school the kind of place that I thought the children would want to be in, a place where their essential selves would not be excluded.

Research Journal:[6] Kelly, is this why you wanted to join in this conversation to talk about middle space? Sometimes I wonder if middle space is something we could talk about, come to understand, try to create in our classrooms, if nothing in our own educational experience or that of our children or in the conditions that surround us as teachers had impinged on our private selves or marginalized our professional selves? What I'm asking, I guess, is could someone who has played the game we call school so well or so unquestioningly as to be unaware of any restriction even enter into this conversation? Do all the members in this group have a story to tell that offers an explanation or points to a reason we find the concept of middle space interesting, intriguing or important enough to spend all this time discussing? What ghosts are in the school rooms that we inhabit as teachers? As Grumet reflecting on Virginia Woolf says, we may be in bare rooms but they are not empty.

Transcripts: (pp. 237 - 239)
L. There was something that Jill and I asked ourselves and our students everyday when we taught an undergraduate course for teachers last term. We asked it of them, and to them, "Who is a good teacher and what does being a good teacher mean for you?" This was a course on reflective teaching, so looking at being and becoming and learning to be, and learning about teaching were what the whole course was basically about as far as I could see. To help the students with their thinking, we asked them to put together a portfolio of their teaching and of what teaching meant to them. Out of the sixty in the class there were about six who stood apart from the rest. We tried to put our finger on what distinguished these students and decided there was

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[6] Text prefaced by "Research Journal" has been taken from Schroeder's Research Journal, January 1993 to the 1995 completion of the research project.

something about their thoughtfulness, how deep they could get in their thinking about teaching and how critically they thought about things that became apparent. Whereas, some of them would just say things like, "This is fun and I've always wanted to be a teacher and be with kids (some dramatic interpretation of this remark led to laughter) ever since I was a little kid!", at the other end of the continuum there were those few who seemed to be thinking at a more reflective level. I don't know how they got there. Some were young, some weren't. Some were male and some female. It didn't seem to matter.

M. It would be interesting to plot their life experiences and to compare them.

L. But I think it's more than their life experiences. It's what they've done with them!

## .... To "know the place for the first time"

L. That showed up in their portfolios too. While one student wrote about her experience of an after school care van breaking down, another student wrote a story titled, "Sometimes I Think I'm Too Sensitive." In this writing, he told the story of a girl in high school, a good friend of his, who was in a real crisis situation. He told how he became part of her story and how he went home and cried every night for her. That was just one of the many stories in his book. He also told a lot of kid stories. His stories were on a completely different level than many of the other stories because the way he looked at things was just so different from how most of the others did.

K. Did he fit your criterion of a good teacher?

L. Mmmhmm, mine and Jill's. He talked about kids so thoughtfully whereas the others talked about what their schedules were which is probably how I would have talked about kids when I was twenty-one. (laughter)

D. I'm trying to connect this conversation to the middle space. I wonder did this course provide middle space in the teacher education program or in the practicum experience for the students' reflective thinking? Or did their reflective thinking create a middle space for learning? I wonder how these ideas might apply to the students in our classrooms at school and to the teacher's continuing professional development after university. I know that taking the time to reflect on my experiences as a child or on my own children's experiences and connecting these experiences with the students I teach is a necessary part of my ability to create middle space.

M. For me the ability to reflect from more than one perspective is also the mark of a gifted teacher, one who seems to know what is going on in kids' minds at any given moment. I need to know how to enter the child's world socially, psychologically and academically so I can connect with each child. It goes beyond the academic part. I don't know where the ability to connect with children comes from, nor am I sure that it's something that can be taught.

Anne's Reflection:[7] *Yes, this intuitive sense. I know just what Margaret means. It is important, and yet it isn't easily taught or learned.*

D. But can it be learned?
M. I don't know. I don't know.

## ....A space divided: My life on pause

Transcripts/Reflections: (pp. 33 - 34)
D. I took a course from Jean in Calgary in 1986 when she was still teaching there. That was one of the few times I had a feeling of space in the context of my educational experiences. Until that point in time, well let me tell you a story.

*I was talking to Kelly yesterday about a project she's working on and as I said to her, in school I was always the kind of person who thought I had to sit there and do what was expected of me. But more than that, I was the kind of student who very much wanted to do what was expected of me even though there were many times when but for my own interventions, I could and would have been very bored. From my earliest memories, I know I always had a book in my desk which I read during class time. Not that I was disinterested in school. I was very interested and as actively involved as I could be, but juxtaposed with that image of myself as a model student are the feelings of panic that would wash over me if I thought I might finish my book before the end of the day, if I thought there might be no escape. On one level, I came to accept this as what you had to do in school if you were always finished your work, or if the teacher was listening to a class bogged down in oral reading, or if you already knew what was being taught. Thinking back, I realize I accepted a lot of responsibility not just for my own learning but for filling all the empty spaces as well. These were the times, I came to believe, when you just went into your own head, or your own book. . . . I remember saying to Jean during the course that in school I lived simultaneously in two worlds. I compared it to being on a divided highway. One part of me, the good student, was doing what was expected and one part was either engaged in a conversation in my head, or in a book. I can remember other students giving me little warning signals that the teacher was approaching so I could shove my book back into my desk. They knew I lived in two worlds and surprisingly they aided and abetted my attempts to escape from the world of the classroom! . . . . With all the reading I did, it's amazing I never read Charlotte's Web (White, 1952) until I was teaching grade one. But the first time I read it I almost hollered, "That's me! I'm Wilbur!" as I read aloud the account of his valiant attempt to escape from his pen while the other animals simultaneously cheered him on and called his*

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[7] The four teachers in this study wrote their reflections on the group's conversations onto the transcripts. These reflections were entered into the original transcripts and appear in this research text as *Reflections* which include the author's name.

*back. At that time, I knew the teachers would not approve because they always yelled at students who were not in the right spot so I paid enough attention so I never got caught. . . . Now as a teacher looking back on this experience, I can't believe they didn't know. I think they were just relieved I was getting good marks and wasn't causing any trouble. . . . But not having met Wilbur yet, I went to university, a mature student, the mother of two, still very much the good student who was not going to openly question or challenge the educational system or those in authority and who was willing to go along with what was expected of me in this new situation even though by this time I had been awakened into consciousness (I am somewhat relieved to be able to report) to the extent that I now judged many requirements as jumping through hoops*[8] *in order to reach an end I had chosen. . . . Now, today, as I write this and think back to how outwardly compliant I was, about how I meticulously completed each assignment no matter how meaningless or irrelevant it seemed to me, about how I was so proud of the good grades I received through giving back the knowledge which had been funnelled down to me, about how I patiently put my own needs and desires on pause so I could meet objectives defined and controlled by others, I am dumbfounded. I am unable to comprehend my actions. I had consistently questioned my parents' authority in my teenage years but I had not even considered questioning the much more repressive and authoritarian school system I was in. Knowing who I was apart from and outside the educational system both as a teenager and as an adult entering university makes my actions or worse yet, my lack of action, my lack of resistance even harder to accept or dismiss . . . . I'm not sure I want to look in this mirror much longer. . . . What does this have to do with middle space? . . . . I did not intend to write this. . . .How did the transcripts merge with these images from the past?. . . . But as I continue to stare at my self in retrospect I realize how powerful the script I was living out in school must have been . . . . I know this because I know who I was . . . . and yet despite who I was, I unquestioningly and even eagerly accepted as right, the traditional, largely invisible view of knowledge that was played out by the actors on the set called school. . . .*

But to continue what I was saying about Jean, I was working on my master's degree when I took a course with Jean and finally realized that I did not have to put my life on pause while I pursued my education. Furthermore, I came to understand that the personal and the academic could be connected, the personal and the professional could occupy the same time frame and the same space. In her class, my stories were accepted. I was accepted. I no longer needed to maintain the split. Just in the nick of time (laughter) I found a middle space where I could become reintegrated and connected.

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[8] In saying this, I am not saying that I did not learn anything worthwhile, that I took no good courses or had no good teachers in school or in university. On the contrary, I learned a lot about the world and about myself. I had many teachers who enriched my life by sharing their knowledge with me. What I did not have was a sense of connection between the personal and the public or a sense of ownership for my education. The important choices were already made, before I came including the choice to decide what would count as knowledge.

K. It makes a whole lot of difference if you've had the chance to be in a situation where you do have some space around you.
M. When I was in university I took a course with David Dillon. (oh, yes) I found that he gave us a lot of space too.
K. What are we saying though, when we say that? He gave us a lot of space.... (pause)
L. I think for me, the space is constructed when the teacher lets you ask the questions, when it's what is important to you, your questions which are important in the course. You know, when the teacher says, "We're here for the purpose of learning about language arts. What are the questions that you have? What is your agenda in this course?" (overlapping talk) I took a course with him too, and I was in shock. . . . Tell me what to do!
M. Two papers, three out of twenty. . . .
L. Oh I know, and for the first couple of weeks. . . .
M. And some people couldn't stand it!
L. Oh, yes, "Tell me what to do. Tell me what to do. What do you mean, what's important to me? I don't know anything so how could I ask a question when I don't know what we're talking about here? You tell me."
D. I found the same thing in a summer course I took with Madeleine Grumet. I think she tried to create some middle space but she had some students almost frantic and this was in a graduate class. I thought the students would have had some idea of why they were there and what they were doing. Many of them were teachers who were giving up their holiday to take this course, and yet, there were several of them who wanted everything spelled out and outlined. They had no idea of what they wanted to do in this time and space. I suddenly realized my ideas about knowledge and education had changed a lot since that course with Jean. I watched Madeleine try to break this dependency on what the teacher wanted and encourage students to set their own boundaries, but they kept going back, and back, and back, and pushing her to say more and more and more! Inside, I was screaming, and screaming, and screaming because I was thinking, the more you're asking her to define it for you, the tighter you're drawing the space around me. Before she had been pushed into defining everything, I had felt I had space to bring myself into the course, (yes) and I'm sure that's how she had envisioned the course would be. But because some students kept pushing her to set more criteria, to say more about what she wanted, to ask the questions and provide examples of the answers she expected, my middle space, what was then possible for me in that class, was contracted (mmhmm). Once she'd been forced into playing the professor, remnants from my past cast me to play the role of a student in a way I no longer wanted to. (yes, yes)

Reflective Turn: In attempting to "teach against the grain, to challenge the status quo" as reflected in the banking metaphor where the teacher makes deposits and the student withdrawals, and to implement instead an engaged pedagogy, bell hooks, (1994, p. 201) found that many students become very uncomfortable. I think these stories have the potential to help those of us who want to construct a middle space with the students in our classrooms understand the apathy or the resistance that often meets our efforts when we try to imagine and live new stories in our teaching lives. Connelly & Clandinin (1994b), citing the work of Britzman, explore those experiences in school and stories of education which limit our freedom as students and teachers. But like Greene (1988), they suggest these prisons can be the source of "imaginative freedom to view different possibilities" (p. 151).

## .... The resonance of shared experiences

As a researcher, I must trust that in the telling and retelling of each teacher's personal stories and in the collaborative inquiry and storying of experience that evolves will the significance of this study to curriculum theory and practice be found (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994b). In the voices that are heard, in the resonance of shared experiences, in the action that is encouraged, in the experiences of the children who live in our schools, in all of these places will its significance be judged. For "curriculum theory can not advance if it abstracts itself from time, history, place, and human intention" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 20), nor can personal freedom be achieved if it is extracted from a public space and a desire to overcome dehumanizing alienation in our social institutions (Greene, 1988; Freire, 1990; Taylor, 1991).

Robert Coles (1989), writing in *The Call of Stories*, emphasizes through stories of personal experience and through his personal experience of stories, the call that stories have on us emotionally and morally as well as aesthetically and intellectually. He talks also about the story's unvoiced call to action in our lives and in our world, not given as a prescription to be taken but as a narration of life to be drawn closer and examined more thoughtfully, as a place to construct, as a place to come to know.

Teachers' stories are not treated as objective data in this research. Although it is recognized that stories neither replace nor record the original subjective experience, and that in the act of recollection of experience necessary to fashion the telling, as well as in the teliing itself, distance from immediate experience does exist (Crites, 1971); it must be recognized that stories do not exist apart from the persons who lived and told them, from the people who heard and discussed them. They came to us "through the living human being--and not anonymously", they were "born in the particular--not in the general humanity but in this man, that woman, their child" (Welty, 1979, p. 63), they were conceived in the fullness of human emotion (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), they were spoken in a voice which is unmistakably the authors, they were passed on through human hands. Nor are these stories presented as "findings" which can speak for themselves (Eisner, 1991; Mooney, 1975). Both voice and meaning must be forever situated in the subjective reality of those who tell them, must remain forever connected to the interpretation of those who hear them; an interpretation not arrived at as it were once and for all, but an ongoing dynamic and changing construction, a shared and intersubjective negotiation of meaning.

Although the guiding purpose of this inquiry is the development of a shared understanding and ultimately a more sensitive and morally responsive educational practice and theory, the scope of this study will not encompass the production of particular knowledge which can then be scientifically extended to other contexts; but will rather facilitate the collaborative construction and presentation of this shared personal knowledge in a public forum where "born subjective, we learn what our own idea of the objective is as we go along" (p. 142) and where "the living world itself remains just the same as it always was,"....to "test and talk back to the story any day in the week" (Welty, 1979, p. 115).

# CHAPTER TWO

# EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

> We might think of freedom as an opening of spaces as well as perspectives, with everything depending on the actions we undertake in the course of our quest, the *praxis* we learn to devise (Greene, 1988, p. 5).

Although epistemological and methodological considerations are interwoven in the living and the telling of this research story, in this chapter they are reframed so as to become the focus of our attention. Through highlighting, some choices and considerations which might otherwise have gone unnoticed in the research text will be made visible. Neither the research scene nor the story of the research have arranged themselves. It is therefore important that arrangement of each - the choices made and the actions devised in our quest for understanding - be made explicit. As researcher and author, I have attempted to foreground both the knowledge of individual classroom teachers and the knowledge these teachers constructed collaboratively as they engaged in an ongoing search and re-search to understand their work in classrooms and their lives as professionals. In both the research and the writing, I have attempted to work with these teachers to construct a space wherein we could hear those voices which have been noticeably absent in the construction of a knowledge base of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Lincoln, 1993).

In this inquiry, I have been both a researcher and a teacher. Now as the narrator, I am an interpreter of the stories. The knowledge which was constructed and reconstructed within our storytelling group and in our subsequent reflections on these conversations has not remained static in its retelling, nor have we. We all continue to learn from our participation in this inquiry and new understandings constructed during the writing process are not excluded from the research story. Both the research and it's telling have been organized around our collaborative, ongoing search for meaning.

# PART I.
# EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## .... A search for meaning

Aristotle has said that, "Man by his nature seeks to know." But I wonder, although it is natural to want to know, is there a natural way of knowing? How do we know and how do our ways of knowing (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; van Manen, 1991; Reid, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) determine or affect what is known? For surely the way in which I gain, structure and represent knowledge must affect the composition of the reality I ultimately construct. Surely all ways of knowing do not yield the same results. Eisner (1991, p. 28) has proposed that "the conceptual framework we employ directs our attention in particular ways and, therefore, what we experience is shaped by that framework" even as the knowledge we are able to construct is ultimately bounded by that framework. Therefore, as one who wants to know, it becomes important for me to question my framework, my way of making meaning.

In this attempt to understand how I construct knowledge, I am drawn to the ways of knowing explored by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1990), by Greene in *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988), by Dewey in *Experience and Education* (1938), and *Democracy and Education* (1963), and by Eisner (1991) in *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*, as these authors have much to say about how we come to know and about how our knowledge is intimately connected to our experience in and of the world. Unlike those who view knowledge as the product of rational, objective inquiry, Freire, Greene, Dewey and Eisner view knowledge as an active, creative, interpretive process of construction and reconstruction we engage in with others or through reflective dialogue with ourselves - a dialogue which is nevertheless framed within cultural boundaries that circumscribe our ability to give meaning to our experiences (Anderson & Jack, 1991). For these authors, knowledge is not conceptualized as something external, something that exists independently of the knower's life experiences or the culture in which it is constructed.

Whereas, an emphasis by the Western World on attaining empirical knowledge has resulted in a belief that we can discover truth and come to know things objectively, Eisner (1991) argues that knowledge is constructed within the tension and the interdependence of self and society, person and world. "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1990, p. 58). While what we have come to know as objective or factual knowledge has been valued precisely because it is perceived as existing independently of a natural and social context, for these writers, knowledge is socially and contextually situated and it is only within this social context that its value is assigned.

## .... Dialogical construction of knowledge

Such knowledge is constructed through dialogue, "dialogue that allows the negotiation of meanings through which the self in relation to other selves and to one's cultural communities is constituted" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p.7), dialogue wherein inner and outer voices are connected, dialogue wherein numerous voices are heard, dialogue wherein we are able to interpret our lived experience from as many vantage points as possible. Dewey, Freire, Greene and Eisner suggest new knowledge will be created only as we break out of the traditional modes of knowing, as our self-reflection and critical consciousness allow us to explore other ways of knowing.

These authors have also discussed the related and recursive nature of knowledge, dialogue and action. Dewey says "every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences" (1938, p. 35). But not only does it affect subsequent experiences but the identities we create, for as Greene says, "The richness, the complexity of the selves people create are functions of their commitments to projects of action they recognize as their own" (1988, p. 22). Knowledge of the self and of the world does not reside in only the external world of the object or the internal world of the subject but in man's "mediation of the world" where "one can not speak of an actor, nor simply actors, but rather of actors in intercommunication" (Freire, 1990, p. 123) with each other and their mutually constructed world. In this world, "understanding the narrative and contextual dimensions of human actors can lead to new insights, compassionate judgment, and the creation of shared knowledge and meanings that can inform professional practice" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 8).

### .... Narrative knowing

Looking at the meaning humans create out of their experiences with the world, Bruner (1990, 1991) Geertz (1973) and Polkinghorne (1988) say it is as humans participate in their culture that meaning is constructed, negotiated, shared and interpreted. However, what is experienced, what is individually and socially constructed and comprehensible, is dependent on the organizational frameworks that are available in our culture. Both language and culture play key roles in determining the forms and the possibilities available for living our lives and telling our stories.

Bruner and Polkinghorne propose that meaning, in thought and discourse, is organized, held and expressed in a narrative form which links human actions and events in a way that makes sense contextually. These authors distinguish between narrative and paradigmatic (logical/scientific) frameworks for knowing. While paradigmatic discourse is organized to demonstrate proof through the use of formal logic, narrative discourse demonstrates the meaning of the whole, "...the speaker's experience of a unity" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 36). This narrative, storied form, composed of a sequence of temporally meaningful episodes involves human beings as characters or actors whose lives as both individuals and groups attain meaning and coherence within the stories they tell themselves.

We are in the middle of our stories and can not be sure how they

> will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be (Polkinghorne, 1988 p. 150).

Because the identity, experience and knowledge of both the self and the group are constructed narratively, hermeneutic interpretation or "- hearing the meaning of a story - " (Polkinghorne p.160) will lead to reading that is less likely to misunderstand or distort than will interpretation based on logico-scientific principles.

### .... Personal practical knowledge

In their ongoing exploration of teachers' personal practical knowledge and their attention to methodological concerns, Clandinin and Connelly have continued to push back the boundaries of narrative inquiry and to open legitimate spaces wherein this research can be conducted. Even though narrative methods of inquiry and of research writing have gained legitimacy within the social sciences, these researchers continue to ask "hard questions about telling teaching stories" and to re-question "what might be accomplished in educational studies through the use of story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin 1994a).

Returning to the work of Dewey which portrays education, experience and life as intertwined, Clandinin and Connelly argue that the study of education can not be separated from the study of experience, the study of life. They further argue, that this experience is organized and told in a storied form. In a research text, this organization and telling is directed by the teller's intentionality and focus, bounded by the historical and temporal positioning of the experience, and influenced by the relationship between the participants and the researcher. Their research has resulted in a movement toward establishing collaborative relationships between researchers, teachers and schools; in a renewed focus on storytelling as a prelude to the retelling and restructuring of personal knowledge to facilitate both educational understanding and change; and in the possibility of new stories, conversations and definitions of curriculum.

## .... Knowledge communities

Further to this, Craig's dissertation, *Coming to Know in the Professional Knowledge Context: Beginning Teachers' Experiences* (1992), offered a conceptualization of knowledge communities I have used to inform my research and provided me with a context to question my understanding of collaboration. Unlike the work of Butt (1988, 1989) in collaborative autobiography and autobiographic praxis, which has been based on the notion that collaboration not be an integral part of the participants' attempts to tell and interpret the stories of their lives but only enter as an addendum to the autobiographical process, Craig (1992) has defined a knowledge community as "a group of people 'dwelling together' in common meaning which is storied and restoried through conversations which shape and are shaped in community" (p. 169). The differences between these two conceptions of the individual's construction of knowledge relative to the others in one's world are of great significance if we subscribe to the view of knowledge as socially constructed meaning. Whereas, Butt has stated that at least initially we are responsible for constructing the meaning of our lives by ourselves and that this meaning would be less than true if others were allowed to interact with the factual reporting of these lives, Craig has embraced a view of knowledge which proposes we can not know meaning independently of the many personal and professional communities in which we live.

Those we engage in dialogue with, internally as well as externally, do not contaminate the data; rather they provide us with the context wherein we can begin to understand. For it is through the telling and the retelling of our stories that we can know the meaning of our lives and of our world, it is in the world not apart from it that knowledge is created.

## .... An emerging feminist consciousness

As I began this collaborative research project, I chose to embed the conceptual framework and methodology in a knowledge community of constructivist philosophers, researchers and activists. That knowledge community continues to speak to the way of knowing that informs this study and the writing of the research text. However, in the course of the research, other voices have been added to the conversation. As the stories which were told and retold in the research group and in the research text resonated with those told by other women, I have found this research to be increasingly at home within knowledge communities of feminist writers whose work is based on the understanding that gender is a category which shapes society and the lives of individuals unequally within that society, and feminist activists who are committed to exposing and ending these inequalities particularly as they relate to the nature and control of knowledge and learning in educational systems.

This emerging feminist consciousness, which includes a space for individual voices within the conversation of the community and which integrates particularity and universality, can be found in Dewey's (1963) description of a democratic community. Acknowledging each voice in a "community of otherness" (Buber, 1983) allows for a dialectic of faithfulness to the self and openness to the diversity of the other, "a reality of the 'between', what comes to be in the working together, the cooperation of human beings with one another" (p. 134). Conversational spaces which welcome those who have been marginalized in the community are at the heart of a feminist epistemology which seeks to reunite self and society in a middle space which denies neither the self nor the other.

Nevertheless, the feminist consciousness is informed by the understanding that "women find themselves inside institutions whose practices and intentions are historically designed to keep them outside its concrete and theoretical frames" (Lewis, 1992, p. 172). It is fuelled by a desire to end women's subordination to masculine privilege. While the position of women within a society thus structured, makes it difficult to "examine the gendered assumptions embodied deeply and subtly in their theoretical premises or to grasp the full significance of the presence and power of gender in educational settings" (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 138); Harding (1993) argues:

> ...Those at the bottom of such social hierarchies can provide starting points for thought - for everyone's research and scholarship - from which humans' relations with each other and the natural world can become visible. This is because the experience and lives of marginalized peoples, as they understand them, provide particularly significant problems to be explained or research agendas. These experiences and lives have been devalued or ignored as a source of objectivity-maximizing questions - the answers to which are not necessarily to be found in those experiences or lives but elsewhere in the beliefs and activities of people at the center who make policies and engage in social practices that shape marginal lives (p. 54).

## PART II.
## ON MATTERS OF METHODOLOGY

### .... Situating the methodology in the stories of our lives

In an effort to overcome the silence of teachers (Grumet, 1988) and give voice to the lived experience of students, to join individuals in the collaborative construction of knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a) and to represent the raw material of lived experience in such a way that neither diversity nor complexity would be omitted in the search to know and understand (Bruner, 1987), this research inquiry was situated between the methodological frameworks of interpretive biography as presented by Denzin (1989) and the personal experience methods described by Clandinin and Connelly (1994). Through these methodologies I explored a way of knowing that drew on both my own and others' personal experiences and included the researcher in what is known. Through these methodologies I was able to provide spaces for the interpretation and reinterpretation of experience and of meaning which preserved the drama and metaphor of life in its telling.

Denzin (1989) names the technique of "creating literary, narrative, accounts and representations of lived experiences" (p. 11) interpretive biography. He defines interpretive biography "as the studied use and collection of life documents, or documents of life (Plummer, 1983; p. 13)" which selectively describe "turning-point moments in individuals' lives" (p. 13). Although autobiography, biography, diaries, letters, life stories, narrative, personal experience stories, case studies and oral histories all fall within the scope of the biographical, for the purposes of this study I relied mainly on the participants' written and oral stories of personal classroom experience, group conversations and collaborative interpretations to explore the meaning of middle space in the lived experiences of those individuals and learning communities interacting within the world of school.

These stories or "literary productions", written by an individual who "writes him- or herself into the life of the subject written about" ( p. 16), "are fictional, narrative accounts of how something happened" (p. 41) built "on the assumption that each person is a storyteller of self experiences" (Denzin, 1989, p. 43). They are accepted as true to the person's lived experience even though we acknowledge they could have been told differently in the past and that they will in all probability be told differently in the future. They are regarded as true even though we accept that what the listeners are hearing is to a large degree determined by who they themselves are, what their knowledge, experience and concerns will permit them to hear (Coles, 1989; Borland, 1991).

These stories of experience are those we are moved to tell by virtue of our subjectivity (Peshkin, 1985). They are the "stories of individuals - individual students and teachers whose experience has been historically under-represented in conventional readings and texts" (Edgerton, 1991, p. 79). They "help to link men's inner lives as well as orienting them to a common public world" (Crites, 1971). They are the stories that will facilitate the understanding of self, not as narcissism but as a dialogical construction (Taylor, 1991), and more significantly as a "precondition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others" (Pinar, 1988). These stories can "offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings"

(Coles, 1989, pp. 159 - 160).

Denzin (1989, p. 18) has stated that "the biographical method rests on subjective and intersubjectively gained knowledge and understandings of the life experiences of individuals, including one's own life." Reflexively, these life experiences which are only ever partially captured in "the stories we hear and the stories we tell", " shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture" and "contribute to our knowing and our being known" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 1) for "the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 221). Both personally and culturally, we story and restory our selves into being and into being known.

To facilitate this personal and interpersonal construction of knowledge within this research inquiry, participants were encouraged to tell both written and oral stories of personal experience which they saw as related to the topic of this research. They were encouraged to connect the autobiographical with their work as professionals. And it was in the spaces between these storied lives, that we constructed a safe and caring place for the collaborative construction and reconstruction of our knowledge and our identities as teachers.

### .... Conversation and collaborative interpretation

In an effort to maintain methodological consistency with the constructivist approach to knowledge which informs this research, oral stories and collaborative interpretation of both oral and written stories were sought through the ongoing conversation and collaboration of the participants and the researcher (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a; Hollingsworth, 1994 ). In this respect, the question and answer format of the traditional research interview was redefined as a process of dialogue wherein meaning is socially constructed (Mishler, 1986). "Considerations to be shared and discussed, reflected upon, and debated" (Eisner, 1991, p. 205) were offered only to encourage conversation within this "knowledge community"

(Atkins, 1988; Craig, 1992), rather than as the basis for the type of stimulus response questioning which occurs within a more traditional framework with its inherent power, objectivity (Minister, 1991) and "suppression of discourse" that is unsolicited (Mishler, 1986, p. viii). As the conversation between all participants deepened, and pathways of thought and topics of interest became apparent, the researcher sought to follow as well as to lead, to become a participant as well as a researcher in the study and to work collaboratively with classroom teachers to create a space where both the teachers' and the researcher's voices could be heard (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a; Hollingsworth, 1994).

The creation of such a space as a context for this inquiry was simultaneously a methodological issue, a guiding metaphor and a matter of ethical consideration. For while the need for this space was evident, the manner in which it could best be constructed was less clear. And although a middle space of learning was constructed through our conversations and stories, there was much we had to learn about living together in this conversational space.

## .... In good company

Grumet (1987) reminds us that "if telling a story requires giving oneself away, then we are obligated to devise a method of receiving stories that mediates the space between the self that tells, the self that told, and the self that listens: a method that returns a story to the teller that is both hers and not hers, that contains her self in good company." Recent attempts to define this "good company" have been made by Mishler (1986), Miller (1990), Witherell & Noddings eds. (1991) and Gluck & Patai eds. (1991).

In his book, *Research Interviewing* (1986), Mishler argues that the concept of speech as a standardizable stimulus and response unit in the traditional research interview "undercuts the potential and special contribution of interviewing for theoretical understanding of human action and experience" (p. vii), and proposes that the interview be regarded as discourse and as such that it be understood as a process and product of mutual construction of the participants. Furthermore, he proposes that as a speech act or event, this jointly constructed discourse is often in the form of a narrative account or story as this appears to be a natural way that individuals give meaning to and communicate their experiences, a point he supports with examples from many areas of the human sciences. While Mishler has made a significant contribution in establishing "good company" for our stories through his reconceptualization of the interview process as discourse and has realized the need to redefine analysis and interpretation toward this end, he has, I feel, fallen short of his initial objective by focusing too narrowly on the concept of story as literary structure. This focus has resulted in the proposal of several methods of linguistic and narrative analysis which deal with topics of syntax, semantics, pragmatics, structure and interactional context all meant to judge the quality of the response but none of which propose to look at stories primarily as a way of understanding the personal experience they represent or looking more deeply at the phenomenon they thoughtfully explore. However, Mishler's call for a radical transformation of the traditional approach to interviewing, his concern with the relationship of power that exists between the researcher and the interviewee, his notions of story as contextually grounded meaning and his desire to empower both participants in the interview are all valid issues that have informed the design and ethical considerations of this research as has his reference to Trow's (1981) indictment of the mass media in, *Within the Context of No Context*. Mishler's analysis compares Trow's warning about the destruction of the human scale of experience, which Trow refers to as the "middle distance" (p. 119) that exists between the grid of two hundred million and the grid of intimacy, to research which fragments and alienates through excluding or obscuring the real and valid contexts of our experiences. Mishler further explores this "middle distance" in his reference to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule's descriptions in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, (1986) of the collaborative research relationship and unstructured interviews that provided respondents the space necessary to tell their life stories in their own voices.

In an attempt to mediate such a space within this research inquiry, I worked in a collaborative and collegial relationship with other teachers who shared my research interest. "Good company" within such a reciprocal relationship has been explored by Miller (1990) in *Creating Spaces and Finding Voices: Teachers Collaborating for Empowerment*, a chronicle of six teachers' struggle to create a collaborative community of inquiry. This narrative, drawn from excerpts of the teachers' conversations and dialogue journals, contains accounts of individual and collective research processes as well as concrete examples of the participants' continuing attempts to explicate constraining forces and identify enabling dynamics in their research and in the social and cultural contexts in which they work. Miller offers an indepth look at the collaboration process which evolved through the group's willingness to ask questions rather than through a set agenda, without attempting to provide a model or methodology for others to follow but with the caution that one should "resist the urge to leave the mess for promises of certainty and closure" (p. 58), and the reminder that " 'finding voices' is not a definitive event but rather a continuous and relational process" (p. xi). Within this process, good company occupies the space of open-ended inquiry and speaks with the voice of relationship as participants point to ways in which their differences and similarities "contribute to our understandings of collaboration and of ourselves as constantly changing contributors to this evolving community" (p. 7).

In *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education* (1991), editors Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings have furthered my understanding of "good company" by their inclusion of writing which addresses the primacy of the caring relationship and dialogue in our quest for meaning, the role of the narrator who "provides further meaning - and even further text - to the story being told" (p. 3), and consideration of the audience that our stories will reach as "our personal vision attains its real meaning in relation to another's vision, to the communal self, and to the social network that gives meaning and support to individual existence" (p. 8). Within this context, Noddings (1991) explores the interpersonal reasoning of stories that develop in dialogue as "marked by attachment and connection rather than separation and abstraction" (p. 158) a condition which I think points to establishing both the methodology and ethics of good company. For the listeners of these stories are responsible for the relationship and within the ethic of care will not "use gross power to seize what they want" (p. 160), but will respond with attentiveness, flexibility and suggestions of possibility.

Good company is especially important in the writing process because problems can develop, when one of the listeners, who initially functioned as a participating member of the collaborative research group, leaves the context of inquiry to write the research report. In Noddings and Witherell's book, Susan Florio-Ruane (1991) addresses the role of the research narrator in providing further meaning to the participants' stories as a task shaped by the intended audience but with consequences for those whose stories are thus appropriated. As an ethnographer, Flurio-Ruane had "learned the value of inviting the collaboration of teachers in framing research questions" but had left them "out of the deliberative and expressive phases of research" (p. 235). The resulting problems prompted her to look at these problems of interpretation and values and to address them through "open and extended conversation with the teachers about the research, its reporting, and its potential use to them and their peers" (p. 240).

Some of these same issues have confronted feminist scholars who contributed to the volume: *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (eds. Gluck & Patai, 1991). Anderson and Jack (1991), who critiqued their own interviews, found that while information gathering is an interactive process, a "caring relationship" may result in "fear of forcing or manipulating individuals into discussing topics they did not want to talk about" and thereby deprive them of "the space and permission to explore some of the deeper, more conflicted parts of their stories" (p. 13). Anderson concluded that this resulted in stories that "lacked detailed discussions of the web of feelings, attitudes, and values that give meaning to activities and events" (p. 12). However, she also attributed this problem to her own search for generalizations while she was actually involved in conversation with the participants, as her research-oriented questions tended to cut off the descriptions of the concrete and particularized too soon. From her experience she is able to suggest that each participant be given an opportunity to "reflect upon the meaning of her experience" (p. 16) and encouraged "to explain what they mean in their own terms" (p. 17). Jack (1991) adds to these cautions, the reminder that listening which tries to appropriate what the other is saying into an existing schema or frame of interpretation can also shape what we hear (pp. 18 - 19).

Within this same volume, Borland (1991), recounts how these preexisting frameworks led her to make interpretations that were not shared by the storyteller and which ultimately resulted in the narrator's feeling of alienation from her story as retold by the researcher and the very valid conviction that her story had not been returned to her "in good company", even though the researcher was in this case a very beloved granddaughter. This experience resulted in Borland's concern "about the potential emotional effect alternative readings of personal narratives may have on our living subjects" (p. 71). Although she does not suggest "that our interpretations must be validated by our research collaborators," she does suggest we might extend "the conversation we initiate while collecting oral narratives to the later stage of interpretation" and "more sensitively negotiate issues of interpretive authority in our research" (p. 73).

Research Journal: In a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting (1994), I discussed issues of response and vulnerability which arose in creating a collaborative storytelling context as both a research format and an alternate professional development milieu. Using Noddings notions of fidelity and the ethics of caring I suggested that if we redefined response not only as an answer but as a promise to return something that has been entrusted to us in faith as a condition of our relationship to the teller, we would reposition ourselves ethically within the research relationship. And from a standpoint where fidelity to persons is valued, we would begin to place as much importance on receiving and responding to stories in narrative research as we now do on telling and eliciting them.

## .... A considered thoughtfulness: Hermeneutic Interpretation

As experience is storied and restoried, an understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology can lead to continuing thoughtfulness. Hermeneutics is a "dialectical epistemology" (Howard, 1982, p. 121). Within this dialectic, object to be known and the active, subjective knower as an historical, social, cultural and political human being are unseparated by the process of interpretation. This is based on the belief that knowledge is in the consensus, or "socially justified belief" (Atkins, 1988, p. 445) of the communities to which we belong. Kirk (1989) highlights the reflexivity of this process which "can alter the world in the process of attempting to understand it" (p. 48). This reliance on an ongoing dialectic of communal interpretation and understanding as well as on the human relationships which bind this process of making meaning is of significance for the conduct of participants in this inquiry and the collaborative research story, as well as for future reconstruction of curriculum theory and classroom practice.

"For Rorty, developing a sense of human community is the goal of education. He talks of inventing new forms of communal life by creating new songs, new discourses and new politics, and he suggests that we recast curriculum thought in the language of this new communal discourse" (Atkins, 1988, p. 445). The creation of this communal song which is based on the telling and interpretation of the lived experiences of ourselves and others and the voicing of it in a language that seeks to understand and share rather than to explain and prove is also explored by van Manen (1990) who compares hermeneutic phenomenological research with the writing and interpretation of poetry.

> So phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project; it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1973). But poetizing is not "merely" a type of poetry, a making of verses. Poetizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the

> world. We must engage language in a primal incantation or poetizing which hearkens back to the silence from which the words emanate (p. 13).

Writing, poetizing and interpretation which in this research text have attempted to go back to the silence of the children who sit on the carpets in our classrooms, back to the untold stories of teachers even as it has attempted to point forward to the restorying of our lives in school in more pedagogically thoughtful ways (van Manen, 1990).

## PART III.
## WRITING THE RESEARCH STORY

### .... Transcripts of our conversations

A decision was made prior to the research to tape record all of the conversations of the group. However, at various times in our conversations, when the participating teachers felt especially vulnerable because of the nature of their stories or comments, I was asked to turn off the tape recorder or not to transcribe parts of the conversation. The tapes of our conversations, were subsequently transcribed and made available to all members of the group for reading, reflection and response. Their responses to the conversations and stories in the transcripts - which were written on the original transcripts and given to me - were inserted into the text of the original transcripts and are made available to the reader in this research text in the form of: "*Anne's Reflections*" or Margaret's, Lisa's and Kelly's Reflections. As this reflexivity was integral to the knowledge constructed and reconstructed by both the members and the group, I made the decision to both set apart and include these reflections in the text in such a way that the layered and reflexive nature of our thinking would be apparent.

Also included in the text of the research story are many of the transcripts of our conversations. These transcripts are neither raw data nor unedited text.

At the request of the participants, in consideration of the audience and for artistic reasons, the original transcripts and stories have been rewritten. Therefore, while I have attempted to remain faithful to the meanings that I understood to be expressed by the individual teachers and by the group, I have also interpreted and reinterpreted these conversations and stories in the research story.

Transcripts: (p. 200)
L. How do you understand what the heck I'm saying? (Hmm?) I don't know how you can get anything from any comment I'm making. (laughter)
A. I feel that way about mine too.
L. How did you get that out of these transcripts? My thoughts and words were hardly coherent!
D. I try to listen for the meanings expressed by both the speaker and the group rather than focusing on our hesitant, chaotic, repetitive and incomplete sentences.

In speaking of the inclusion of unedited transcripts in their paper, Goodson and Cole (1993) say they recognize the extra burden this places on the reader but justify it as a necessary part of the process of "rehabilitating the teachers' voices..." (p. 92). As a researcher-teacher, I too wish to construct a middle space where the voices of teachers, and teaching practice, will not be held apart from research and theory. However, while I appreciate what Goodson and Cole are trying to accomplish, I do not think that unedited transcripts are the only way to achieve this. After carefully transcribing our conversations, I am convinced there is little of our oral conversation that can be transferred into a research text in its original form. Furthermore, I am concerned that the thinking underlying this presentation of raw data, which I see as arising from a positivist tradition - where data must be preserved from the contamination of the researcher's subjectivity - is not congruent with a constructivist position which views knowledge as socially constructed and continually open to revision and reconstruction.

As the narrator of this story, I too have a story embedded and evolving in the multiple contexts and communities of my life. This story shapes what I hear, what I see, what I value and what I am able to know. It shapes the rewriting of the transcripts and the research story I am able to tell.

## .... The research journal

Transcripts: (p. 52)
D. I'm going to do my own journal writing on the computer. As I'm transcribing our conversations or doing other writing or reading, I'll insert my comments, wonders and reflections into the transcripts in a different type. I don't know where other researchers keep their field notes, but I decided not to keep mine in a separate book. I wanted everything together and since this research is based on the collaborative construction of knowledge, I didn't want you to think that I was keeping separate notes on our conversations. But it's a new venture for me because I've never done journal writing on a computer before. So when you get your copy of the transcripts next week, there will be journal entries, and transcripts, and references to other research all together. I imagine there will be times when my thoughts will first appear on scraps of paper which I'll have to enter into the computer at appropriate times and I know I'll have to print it out frequently because I still have to have the actual paper in my hands.

As the transcripts were returned to the group members after each meeting, the writing in my research journal - which asked questions, made comments about the both our conversations and the research process, and displayed my ongoing attempts to figure things out - also became part of our shared understanding. My comments, which were prefaced by four stars **** in the transcripts to keep them separate from the original conversation, often marked the places where group members would add their own comments and further reflections on our conversations as they wrote their responses on the transcripts. These starred research journal entries also became the focus of subsequent reflections and conversations.

In the telling of this research story, selected comments from my research journal have been included under the separate heading of: "Research Journal." Also included under this heading, is the reflective thinking I continued to do as I was engaged in understanding, organizing and writing this story of our inquiry into the curriculum of middle space. When this thinking formed the basis of the conference presentations I made during the course of the research, or was included in writing for publication, I have added a footnote to the research journal heading to indicate this.

### .... The reflective turn

Dewey (1910) defined reflective thinking as "the kind of thinking that consists of turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (p. 3), and said that "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends constitutes reflective thought" (p. 9). Dewey (1938) further argues, that educative experiences lead out from themselves into an expanding world and states that teaching and learning only achieve this purpose if they are viewed "as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience" (p. 87).

My reflective thinking in relation to this research project is based on Dewey's notions of the "reconstruction of experience" through looking at one's knowledge "in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" and is congruent with the constructivist epistemology which frames this study. Steier (1991a) has said that researchers working within the constructivist paradigm need to apply constructivist principles to their own research. He proposes that the "notion of reflexivity, where reflexivity can be understood as a 'bending back on itself' " (p. 2) be used as a way to examine our selves and our own constructing processes. He says this "looping back" may "unfold as a spiralling, if we allow for multiple perspectives," (p. 2) and suggests we "become aware of our own research activities as *telling ourselves a story about ourselves*, parallel to what Turner (1981) refers to as a social reflexivity" (p. 3).

Through our conversations, stories and the development of a collaborative relationship, our research group created a space for the teachers in this study to story and restory their teaching lives and constructed a safe space in which they could reflect on their lives in schools. Ardra Cole (1995) has observed that "many teachers who engage in systematic inquiry into their practice and profession must do so secretly, in the margins behind closed doors or away from their places of work" (p. 1). As she looks at the role teachers' self-understanding plays in their development as professionals she claims that "teachers are fundamentally reflective practioners who strive to develop and grow as persons and professionals" (p. 11) but she concludes that the places they work in not only do not provide support for this practice but are antithetical to it. She says in a context which regards professional development as a frill, teachers must account for the time spent on professional development. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on content because it "*counts* more than a curriculum highlighting process matters related to teacher' professional learning" (p. 17).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) also write of a professional knowledge landscape which makes no space for teachers' reflective thinking and speak of the unease created when teachers who want to take responsibility for their own learning disrupt the sacred theory-practice story that invisibly structures the world of school. Teachers who have been "taught that they have incomplete knowledge and that they will have to continue to learn through returning to the university for professional development" are not seen as "knowers who can teach one another" (p. 126). On this professional knowledge landscape, reflective practice is something teachers engage in secretly and alone. While Clandinin and Connelly do not discount the importance of an individual teacher's reflections, like Schon (1983) they propose "that the possibilities for reflective awakenings and transformations are limited when one is alone" and state that "teachers need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways..." (p. 13).

Throughout the research story, I wove our reflections about both our lives as teachers and our storytelling process. These reflections are included in the transcripts, in the group members' reflections and in my research journal entries. As the narrator, I also invited other writers into our research conversation, through the use of the "Reflective Turn" (Schon, 1991). These reflective turns address the need to further turn a subject over in one's mind as one reconstructs experience so it becomes educative (Dewey, 1910, 1938).

They also provide us (the group members, the reader and the narrator of this story) with a way to consider our "knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910, p. 9). The reflective turn often follows our conversation and our stories and opens up our thinking for further discussion. I have not included or cited these others to give credibility to our conversation or to add theory to our practice but to situate our conversation within a broader educational and political framework. Since most of these "other" voices have been added to our conversation in the writing of the research text, the group members were often unaware that their stories had been told or were being told in different ways, in different places. If it were possible, now that these other voices have been woven into our story, we could as a group, through further reflection and reconstruction, tell a new story. But we must all choose the story we will tell, and so I leave these reflective turns pointing to new possibilities and other retellings.

### .... Choosing the stories we will tell

Throughout the research we have all wondered: How do we choose the stories we will tell? But more often than not, this question has arisen as the group members wondered what issues I saw emerging rather than telling me what stories they had identified as important to our research. While I attempted to make this process something that was done by the group through reflection, deliberation and consensus, it has for the most part been my decision as the research storyteller.

Transcripts: (pp. 201 - 202)
D. I put that comment in the transcripts where we talked about student teachers because it seemed like student teaching is something we keep talking about. Today, in the research group which meets in the Centre[1], we discussed how you identify what you're going to tell in the research story. Joy, a visiting professor from Australia joined us today. In her research, she has gathered stories from co-operating teachers. Now her university is asking her why she is selecting to tell some stories and not others. So she wanted to know what we were doing about this dilemma. I told her that my initial

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[1] "The Centre" is the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development located in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

identification of important issues in our conversation about middle space was made visible through the research reflections which I was writing into the transcripts. After that, I told her I was looking at the conversations in terms of the stories they told as well as the frequency or the intensity with which issues were raised.

So, back to my comment in the transcripts, I think we, as a group, need to begin to identity through re-reading and responding to our conversations what we individually and collectively think are the important things we have tried to work through, the things we have told stories about in terms of the dilemmas involved in creating middle space. We also need to look reflexively at the transcripts in terms of our experiences in this collaborative storytelling group and in relation to how we have constructed and reconstructed our knowing. I think this will be a difficult task. What you may have thought was middle space may no longer be what you think after you've heard other people talking about it. We need to sort and organize, to choose the stories we will tell. Now, to answer your question about why I had highlighted the section on student teaching, as I was rereading our conversations, it became apparent that this was an issue we kept returning to over time. It looked like a place where we were bumping up not only against the system but against ourselves, so I thought it might be a good place for us to stop and reflect.

L. Yes, and although I've only spent a short time with my student teacher, the things she talks to me about have been causing me to flash back to my own student teaching and some of the things that I thought about in 1979, which was quite awhile ago.

Research Journal: And with this wonderful lead, Lisa and the other teachers in the group began to tell new stories completing ignoring what I had said about the need to stop and reflect on those already told, not the least bit interested in deciding or even helping me to decide what stories to include in the final research report. But not yet understanding the distance between our work in this group and writing the research story, I try at a later date to make space for this to happen.

Transcripts: (p. 332)

D. At some point in time I'm going to have to quit transcribing our conversations because otherwise we'll just keep mass producing these transcripts (laughter) and we won't have time to add our reflections and to reconstruct our stories. It seems like we have an ongoing momentum, that we keep telling new stories even when we decide we're going to pause and reflect on the stories we've already told.

M. Why don't you try it next week? (laughter)

D. Do you mean, I won't transcribe this meeting, or that we'll spend the next

meeting discussing this one.
M. Yes. (laughter)
D. But you know that I will want to tape those reflections, don't you. So, I don't know how it will work because we never just talk about our old stories even when we set a time (like next week) (laughter) and say we will. Every old story always seems to remind us of new stories and our reflections keep leading us down new paths.

Research Journal: We never did stop telling stories. We told them till the last minute of our last group meeting. We even told them when we responded to the "finished" research text. Let me share the letter, I just received from Margaret.

September 9, 1995

Dear Debbie:

I have just spent the last 72 hours, other than the few required to do the miscellaneous tasks related to being in a family, re-immersed in your apartment living room. How I wish we could meet again, even though I suspect that as a result of the way all our lives have changed and grown that the middle space I fondly remember, is no longer what I remember. Rather like my ex grade six students returning to visit me part way through September, I imagine.

How we laughed! And how much pain was hidden between the howls. I was overwhelmed by how articulate we were and how meaningful our conversations. I did not realize how supportive we were for one another and how we listened. Thank-you for providing us the opportunity to create our own badly needed middle space.

I should tell you though, that in the beginning, I was not at all comfortable with your thesis proposal. I thought that it was somewhat superficial and not nearly "meaty" enough. I know that this adjective does not describe what I mean but I think it has to do with what I felt was true knowledge and how that knowledge is obtained. I could not see how us simply talking about our experiences would enrich the academic world. "In keeping with the situation" let me tell you a story! (Nice touch, wouldn't you say, and rather like days of old.)

### *Learning What?*

*We entered the room, already apprehensive because our teacher was unusual, casual, and had not yet let us know what would be the criteria for our final grade. How could we know what to do if he didn't tell us. Where was the* *handout with the marking scale? And what about our list of assignments? All the rest of our courses were so neatly packaged and oh, so secure.*

*The room was covered in chart paper. Some of the charts contained illustrations which we found reassuringly familiar. All of them contained hieroglyphics. Our assignment: To figure out what each symbol meant.*

*Instant panic. How could we do this? What would we use? Were we being marked on this assignment? Quietly he began to read a story. Our panic subsided somewhat as we recognized the beloved tale of Max in Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1983). When he finished, he simply turned and went back to his desk and said, "Feel free to ask me any questions." We looked at one another, aghast. How could this possibly be considered university level material? What a ridiculous assignment!*

*After a five minute lull, when we simply looked from one to another as though seeking reassurance, small pockets of conversation broke out as people began to tackle the task. It wasn't long before someone shrieked, "I've got it. The symbols # ^_ mean 'the'! Look you can find it here and here and here. We already know it says 'the' because we can recite the story. Now that we know _ is really an "e" we can start decoding things letter by letter." And so it began. After fifteen minutes the classroom became a beehive of activity with people going from one chart to another, calling excitedly over to their friends with new discoveries. The noise level gradually grew more intense and to be perfectly honest, I can not even remember if the professor was there or not. Naturally we did complete the decoding. Naturally the fears and worries of most of the class gradually subsided. And naturally some of us realized that we had just had a unique experience in learning to read with the with added advantage of being able to study the process while we were actually engaged in it.*

*The knowledge I gained from this lesson did not hit me for years. But when I set up my first grade one classroom, it was built around the things I learned in this sixty minute class. But more than methodology, this class taught me that fear of the unknown is often a debilitating force. However, had we not been "forced" into the experience, we never would have felt the fear that children feel when confronted with the new experiences laid out by teachers. I pray that I never forget that fear.*

I guess, Debbie, that I temporarily forgot that lesson after all. I also forgot how we had individually and collaboratively constructed knowledge that day. I cling very strongly to the belief that there is a body of knowledge that exists out there, but this belief co-exists with the belief that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed on both an individual and a collective basis. I can see that my original response to your thesis proposal was based primarily on my first belief in a body of existing knowledge. There is no doubt that we learned and grew as we constructed and reconstructed knowledge. I see now the validity of what we were trying to do, and I also see where I need to do some stretching of my own.

As to the question of whether collaborative storying telling would work as staff development, I would answer yes and no. It was a very powerful experience for me and I believe that it would be for many of my teaching colleagues as well. Just think how strong a staff could become as a team if they met for supper every week and discussed what they believed to be fundamental to learning, teaching and education, as well as to being male, female, adult, child. (life) But, and a very big but indeed, we came together as unknowns with one very strong link - the willingness to discuss our beliefs as a way of exploring what we held near and dear. I do not believe that these characteristics are necessarily part of every educator. Unfortunately. The result of forcing people to discuss and converse in such a fashion could be harmful. However, if this reflecting and dialoguing became part of the education of our new, incoming teachers, perhaps this could be the way of the future.

Debbie, I really liked how you organized the material used in your thesis. It sounds coherent and surprise, surprise, logical! Many thanks for the experience. I learned a great deal about myself through reading and rereading this. For one thing, I suddenly see that I am insightful. I did not realize that I thought so much or agonized so much over teaching, nor the extent to which I really know my students. But as I read the stories I told and wrote three years ago, I realized that many of these children had now passed out of my life and that their stories would have changed, just as ours have done.

With great affection,

Margaret

Reflective Turn: In the chapter, "Reflexivity and Methodology: An Ecological Constructionism," Steier (1991b) writes:

> Bateson (1979) told the story of a computer scientist who asked his computer 'Do you compute that you will ever think like a human being?' The computer, after analyzing its own computational processes, responded with 'that reminds me of a story.' Bateson here meant for us to recognize the relatedness and connectedness of our knowing and how it is embedded in our stories. I submit that we create our research worlds through stories as experiences that are, whether fictive or factive, ways that guide us toward marking some 'streams of life' as described by Wittgenstein (1968), as noticeable while leaving others as background. These stories, which enmesh themselves in our histories and through which we see, are often not admissible in our research communities, as evidence for how we claim what

> we claim. They, through their omission, force the very constructing activity that should be so important to a constructionist researcher, to be unacknowledged (p. 164).

Research Journal: In the writing of this research story, I included stories about the research and the writing process. Because our conversations were focused not only on how we as teachers created middle space in our classrooms but on how we were constructing a middle space in our research group and in our research story, attention to the constructing activity seemed to be something that needed to be marked as important to the identity and the life of our research group. Within this constructing process, I have also attempted to explore my role as an interpreter and narrator of our stories and to make visible not only the building blocks which were used in this construction but the choices and decisions I made as to how they were finally put together.

Reflective Turn: In speaking of the presentation of narrative research, Yvonna Lincoln (1993) says it is important that the researcher "create narratives of fidelity (validity) and rigor" and that these narratives be presented in such a way as to "fulfill the criterion of persuasiveness not only to those who have provided such accounts as representative of their lives, but also to the social/science, educational/research, and policy communities" (p. 36). She says these "texts will have to exhibit authenticity" and faithfulness not only to the "story lines provided by respondents," but also "convey the 'feeling tone' (Terkel, 1984) of the lives" (p. 37). This will be accomplished, she suggests, when " the text itself admits and invites the reader into. . . an experience of the lives "in the round" - with a range of mood, feeling, experience, situational variety, and language" (p. 37). She further proposes that these criterion be used to judge the "educative functions of the research methods and processes" (p. 36).

### .... This is how I make an 'A'

Throughout the writing of this research story I have asked more than once, "Is it a dissertation?" Does it look like a dissertation? Does it sound like a dissertation? My questions reminded me of a story my sister told me about her little girl many years ago.

*Angela has graduated from high school now but she never found school easy even though she was very bright. A little understood nerve and muscle disease not only kept her from participating in much of the physical activity of school, it also made learning (especially reading and writing) in traditional/normal ways difficult for her. Unfortunately, she was allowed to repeat grade one more than once so she could get it right, before a program was set up to meet her special needs.*

*As I said however, Angela was a very intelligent girl who often showed not only unimaginable perseverance but also remarkable creativity in her effort to fit into a system which made no space for her. Not surprisingly, her mother and her teachers did not always appreciate how Angela saw things or what Angela was trying to do. They were determined she would learn in an accepted and acceptable way, and saw her inventiveness and her attempts to figure out the world as stubbornness. On one occasion, quite out of patience with her daughter, my sister called and said to me, "Angela's teacher is quite upset. She was trying to teach her how to make an 'A' but Angela wouldn't listen. She just said to her teacher, "But this is how I make an 'A'."*

For me, this story speaks to the expectations we have about how things should look, about what we are willing to include in normal. It also speaks to our fear that our writing, our stories and our "A's" will not be seen and valued by others in the way we want them to be. It speaks of the trust that is necessary in order for us to try to do things in ways other than they are normally done. It speaks of the openness and the response of the audience to a multiplicity of "A's."

Reflective Turn: Polkinghorne (1995) has encouraged researchers to experiment with a narrative format. He says changing to a storyteller's voice allows participants to be heard in new ways and states that the format of the traditional research report in education is an artifact of the social science disciplines. Not discounting the struggle this will entail, but wishing to encourage alternative formats he says:

> ...The tenacity and power of traditional approaches to doing and reporting research, as well as the possibility of its evolutionary change, has been recently illustrated by its acceptance of qualitative research into its orthodoxy (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1991, p. xvi). This acceptance allows for

> encouragement that a change in the research report format is possible (p. 3).

Stating that the conventional research report was designed to allow for the evaluation of the validity of knowledge claims, Polkinghorne argues this format is inadequate for presenting the usefulness or relevance of research to practice and that a narrative format is more compatible with our present understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge. Polkinghorne says the narrative, or "diachronic research report is based on the understanding that research is a practice, a product of human action" (p. 10) over time. This research practice consists of decisions, actions, interactions and chance occurrences which need to be included in the research text because to strip the knowledge claim from "the actions and happenings that led up to it, is to strip it of its full meaning" (p. 10). Embedding research practice in a framework of improvisation and artistic fluidity and understanding this practice as a mixture of constraint and freedom, he suggests that research reports which "reconstruct the process as consisting of a series of rationally calculated actions moving the process straight toward a knowledge claim miss the human characteristics of the research actor" (p. 14). He cautions however, that while the research report needs to provide a history of the project, this is not achieved through the presentation of "an unedited motion picture depicting the process as it happened" (p.15) but results from consciously editing, selecting and rearranging the elements to be included. "The final story must fit the events while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that was not necessarily in the event as it happened" (p. 16).

Tierney (1995) also encourages us to consider new ways of presenting research, of telling the research story. He says "our representations of reality in qualitative research have been remarkably similar to one another...." and suggests that we need to "develop experimental voices that expand the range of narrative strategies" (p. 3). He says that as authors we need to concern ourselves with how we will present both ourselves and ourselves in relation to others in the text. Released from the constraints of modernity, we need to make decisions about "how we as authors create and present reality" (p. 5). But assuming that he will be questioned as to how these multiple texts will be judged, Tierney states:

> ...In a postmodern world where we develop reflexive texts, it seems incumbent that we logically continue with calls for self-reflexive analysis. Are the characters believable? What is the quality of the narrative voice? Does the text capture a moment or a situation or idea? (p. 20).

Speaking of the importance of honesty in our stories, Tom Barone (1992) says, "like all good art, honest stories are powerfully observed, carefully detailed" (p. 142). He likens the honest storyteller to "a soldier in the struggle against personal alienation" and says the responsible writer is one who takes a political stance and works for the "transformation of schools into democratic communities in which honest storysharing is encouraged among its inhabitants" (p. 143). Barone suggests we evaluate and value our educational stories, our research stories, for their ability to locate the pain and isolation inflicted on those who live and work in our educational institutions and on their effectiveness in sharing with the reader the beating of other human hearts. For like Stone (1988) he believes:

> In the absence of honest storytelling people are abandoned to the beating of their own hearts (p. 75).

# CHAPTER THREE
# THE RESEARCH STORY: STORIED AND RESTORIED

## PART I.
## "A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL A TURNING"

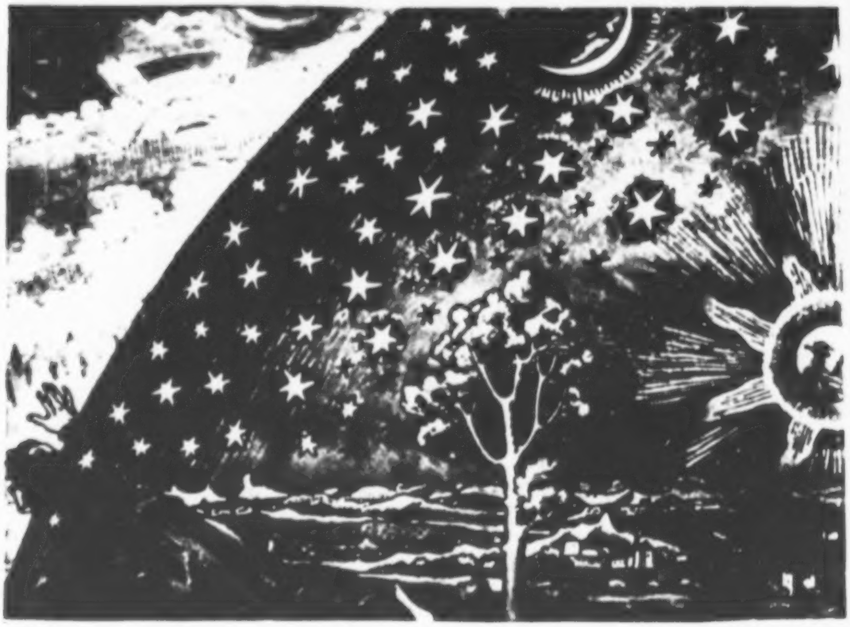

**Figure 3. This etching by Camille Flammarion, 1886, depicts a medieval pilgrim who has traveled to the horizon, crashed through the celestial dome, and seen the mechanisms once thought to make heaven move. He has entered a realm beyond the horizon and the confines of normal reality.**

Aristotle says that the essential element of drama and epic is 'the arrangement of the incidents.' And he goes on to make the famous and endearing remark that this narrative or plotly element consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end: A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end, that which is naturally after something else, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that which is by nature after one thing and has also another after it. According to Aristotle, then, narrative connects events, 'arranges incidents,' in a directional temporal order analogous to a directional spatial order (Le Guin, 1989 pp. 37, 38).

There is a story waiting to be told, I know because it is and again it is not my story even as it is and again is not one story but many stories in one. This story, the one or the many, unlike Aristotle's, has no beginning nor yet any end. The middle can be found both before the beginning and after the end. It stretches time and space and folds back upon itself as its shapes are transformed in kaleidoscopic array. Through storying and restorying, experience is forever changed. It can not be relived in its sequential linearity. What happened first, can now not be presented without the benefit of what has happened since. And yet, there is no going back, the experiences, the words no longer fit into the space or the time from which they emerged. Like Smale's horseshoe[1] , as "space is stretched in one direction, squeezed in another, and then folded... it produces a kind of structured mixing familiar to anyone who has rolled many-layered pastry dough. A pair of points that end up close together may have begun far apart" (Gleick, 1987 pp. 51, 52). Subjectivity and objectivity have intertwined, past, present and future exist in a reflexive loop. If truth existed, none remains, for with one more stretch or one more fold it will change again and no one will be able to predict how one more turn will affect the whole. Each word, each phrase, each sentence and each story represent just one point of infinity. So with this we will have to content ourselves. I am the story teller so I know.

In the telling of the research story, the possibility for linearity no longer exists, if it ever did. The research proposal which supposedly came first was already embedded in autobiographical beginnings which were written later and therefore understood differently because of all that came since. The story of the research could not be separated from these stories either, as it was embedded in both even as it became part of their telling. Also part of this reflexive loop, were the reflections in the research journal which were shared with all participants through the transcripts and in the writing of the research text and which invited their subsequent reflections, and the reflective turns which invited other researchers into this conversation as meaning was socially constructed and reconstructed.

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[1] In the 1960's, Stephen Smale, a mathematician was working on "nonlinear oscillators, chaotic oscillators, and seeing things that physicists had learned not to see" (p.45). He had already been honoured for his work in topology - the study of properties which remain unchanged when shapes are changed through twisting or stretching or squeezing, a geometry on rubber sheets which allowed for spaces on many dimensions.

### .... A meeting of persons: A shared space of possibility

Research Proposal:[2] (pp. 26, 29, 30 and 31) *If this inquiry is to reflect the ways of knowing explored throughout this proposal, there can be no doubt that it will have to be set within a social context of collaboration wherein meaning is actively constructed, interpreted and reinterpreted; and that the research design will have to be conceived as a meeting of persons, a shared space of responsibility and possibility.*

*In order to facilitate the interactions and relationships upon which this inquiry is dependent, I will begin this study by forming a collaborative group of four to five teachers. Participation in this inquiry will be voluntary, and teachers will be included on the basis of their desire to explore the research question in the manner I have broadly outlined in this proposal as well as upon their availability for attending regularly scheduled meetings.*

*This commitment will take time as well as energy. In a preliminary study, I found the interval of time between meetings was too long necessitating the reestablishment of the threads of continuity and purpose and the context of community each time we met. In an attempt to address this problem, I will suggest that this group meet every second week on as many occasions as possible during the first five months of the project.*

*Taking into consideration the time constraints of teachers and desiring to make this an enjoyable as well as an educative undertaking, I will arrange our time together as supper meetings. The first meeting of this group will be devoted to conversation about the inquiry, discussion of the proposed topic and beginning negotiations for our time together.*

### .... The wheel beings to turn

Research Journal: It was finally the first day of February. I had waited several months for this day to arrive, although during much of the time that I waited I had had no specific date to look forward to and so waited more for the anticipated event than for an actual day. But once the date of the first meeting was established, a countdown of days inevitably proceeded and passing time assumed new significance. Nevertheless, with the flipping of a calendar page that was now over, and the event once more became paramount in my thoughts as I moved through the preparations for the first evening meeting of our research group. As I made supper, put the tape recorder in place and positioned and repositioned chairs, I wondered how the evening would proceed. Would the group members all come? Would they be able to eat what I had made for them? I knew them so little that I had no idea what their preferences might be. Would they feel comfortable with teachers they had never met before? Would they be able to make enough meaningful connections between their own needs and the objectives outlined in the proposed research to want to come back another time? What would we talk about at this first meeting?

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[2] Text prefaced by "Research Proposal" has been taken from "Curriculum as a middle space," Schroeder's Dissertation and Research Proposal, 1992.

Research Journal:[3] Several issues emerged as I attempted to negotiate a space for collaborative narrative research within my doctoral program. Throughout this inquiry, I drew attention to how we live out our collaborative research relationships and pushed at the boundaries of what it means to do collaborative research. Although much of the current literature in the area of qualitative research focuses on the research relationship (Hollingsworth, 1994; Miller, 1990), this discussion has neither focused on establishing a collaborative research relationship nor on conditions which might foster or hinder this developing relationship within the context of a doctoral program.

For the doctoral candidate, the beginning of the research relationship is situated in a time preceding the group's first meeting. In many cases it is carefully planned in advance by the researcher in the absence of those others who will restory the collaborative endeavour. Since the research question, the methodology and the context of the research project must be determined prior to candidacy and ethical review and often prior to the naming of participants and commencement of the study, the researcher, like the good host or hostess, is in the position of preparing for the arrival, the visit and even the departure of some future guests.

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[3] Excerpt from Schroeder, D. "Working it out: Negotiating Collaborative Research," a paper presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Study for the Society of Education, Calgary, AB., June, 1994.

I wanted to do research with other teachers as partners rather than as subjects but simply imagining the teachers I might work with when the candidacy process was completed put me in the position of the expert who could decide both what needed to be known and how this would be accomplished. It also left those as yet unnamed others in a position where they had to join a process already in progress. My feeling that this might be perceived by those others as "entering into the middle of everything. . . life going on. . . like a foreign film" echoing the words of Kelly, one of our group members, and that it might make it more difficult for all members of the group to own this research as full partners was confirmed by Margaret at the second meeting of the group when she said, "I'm still not clear enough. I think I have to read your proposal over a lot of times to get a sense of the direction we're going."

These comments make it obvious that my attempt to create space for all participants' voices was not initially understood or appreciated. These teachers saw me as the one who was supposed to know how to do this research and therefore they thought my role would be to explain exactly what I expected them to do. They perceived my open agenda as a hidden agenda which they had to guess, and they saw the research proposal and dissertation as mine even after they had claimed the conversational storytelling process for themselves. Through our conversations it became apparent that the story of university researcher as expert was not only an academic story, but part of the professional experience of most teachers, part of the biographical prison which holds us tightly in old stories and ways of telling those stories even when we plan to tell different stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a). If we wanted to tell a new story of collaboration, we had to become aware of the existence of the old hierarchical story because unless we took the time to bring it into our group discussions, it would continue to exert an invisible power and control that would sabotage the collaborative research process.

Listening to our conversations, I continued to think about the story of collaboration as scripted and as lived. I began to suspect that some of the difficulties we encountered in trying to "work out" a collaborative research relationship were not entirely of our own making nor under our immediate control. In restorying the research process, I began to wonder if some of the dilemmas I experienced in trying to do collaborative research were precipitated by the different epistemological assumptions which underpinned the research methodology I chose to use and the university policies which guided my doctoral research.

Therefore, while it was my experience that qualitative research had gained legitimacy in the university (Polkinghorne, 1995), the compatibility between the guidelines that presently governed much doctoral research and the epistemological base upon which naturalistic methodologies were built needed to be explored. Many requirements for doctoral students[4] still reflected the assumptions of the quantitative paradigm which could be a source of conflict for students who chose to conduct their research using naturalistic research methodologies. Although reducing this problem to a dichotomous comparison of quantitative and qualitative research requirements or to implying these requirements are the only reason it might have been difficult to establish a collaborative research relationship would not be helpful, I am, nevertheless, concerned that the epistemological differences underlying these two paradigms might result in ongoing dilemmas for both graduate students and the teachers they work with if these inconsistencies are not addressed.

In an attempt to understand how the traditional paradigm (Minnich, 1990; Martin, 1994) exerts a continuing influence on my work, I question whether the scientific (objective) view of knowledge and research (which for so long both legitimized what was to be counted as knowledge and governed how this knowledge was to be validated and extended through research) and the criteria for conducting rigorous scientific studies might be an inappropriate or inadequate basis for present university policies which govern qualitative research. If requirements for doctoral research emerge out of an objective view of knowledge (with assumptions that knowledge is external to the knower and that a truth exists which we can ultimately find and verify), and do not reflect a constructivist view of knowledge (which posits knowledge as a social construction which is continually being created and recreated allowing multiple interpretations and ultimately dependent on the knowers), graduate students attempting to do collaborative narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) will be faced with both methodological and ethical conflicts.

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[4] I am referring specifically to those guidelines and policies which are currently written in the University of Alberta's publications pertaining to graduate students and to research.

### .... Co-constructors of meaning

I initially envisioned my doctoral research to be not only a collaborative conversation about the curriculum of middle space but as a space of professional development for myself as a researcher-teacher and for the four teacher-researchers who worked with me. My first dilemma arose as I wrote my research proposal. While I attempted to write it in such a way that I would satisfy the university's requirement that the doctoral candidate have a predetermined research focus, I tried to keep it open ended. I wanted the proposal to be perceived as an invitation for others to not only enter into my question but to personalize the question, and to ask other questions. I wanted the participants to be involved in constructing the research process and in determining the meaning this research would have. This proved to be difficult within the existing framework where there was an unspoken assumption that one could know ahead of time what needed to be known and that this would not change significantly once the research commenced.

> Research Proposal: (p. 30) *Although identification of the research question and methodology were my responsibility, I have tried not to define the scope of this inquiry to such a degree that further input would be unwelcome or inappropriate (Miller, 1990). Participants in this study who choose to become involved because of a shared interest in this topic and the promise that it holds for school improvement will collaboratively construct a group context wherein "questions of mutuality, equality, and voice" are considered (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a) and as*

> *such will be involved in defining all stages of the inquiry. As co-constructors, rather than researcher and subjects, each person's story will be welcomed, each person's voice will be heard. Within a context of dialogue all will be engaged in the telling, listening, interpreting, and retelling and in the constructing and presenting of our collaborative story (Miller, 1990; Clandinin and Connelly, 1991,1994; Connelly & Clandinin 1994a).*

Research Journal: [5] The university requires the doctoral candidate to author the research proposal and the research report. At the candidacy examination and the thesis defence it is the candidate who must respond to questions and defend the findings. There is an implication in this process that the researcher has the sole responsibility for the research question, methodology, findings and interpretation of the findings. This assumption is in conflict with the reality of collaborative narrative research which involves a joint construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

However, I am aware that substituting one set of guidelines for another is not the answer. Working collaboratively with others requires flexibility and a willingness to renegotiate the working relationship and the mutually agreeable expectations throughout the life of the collaborative relationship. For the doctoral student, this renegotiation may be a greater risk than is initially realized. Throughout the life of a research project, the participants' circumstances and commitment to the project may change. They may become more or less involved in the project.

In our group, participants felt they owned the process of professional development that being involved with other teachers in meaningful curriculum dialogue and storytelling provided them with, but none of them expressed an interest in participating in the final writing project. Two teachers in this research project have subsequently moved and all have had changes in their lives. There can be no doubt that their interest in the research has in a sense become past tense, while my interest is very much a present and future consideration. I need to finish writing my dissertation. Once I have done this, I hope all participants will contribute to final revisions and reinterpretations but I can not assume that this will happen even though our initial agreement provided for the involvement of all group members until the written research report was complete.

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[5] Excerpt from: Schroeder, D. "Working it out: Negotiating Collaborative Research," paper presented at CSSE, Calgary, AB. June, 1994.

### .... Co-constructors of middle space

> Research Proposal: (pp.34, 35) *Mishler (1989) suggests that many traditional research relationships are marked by "a striking asymmetry of power" (p.117) which need to be addressed as this imbalance of power and lack of control can have negative effects on the participants. Mishler recommends that our choice of methodology be based on concern for the participants rather than on investigative problems and counters the notion that research methods are neutral and that in merely describing reality they have no power to change that reality (p.120). In an attempt to assess the potential impact of research methods, Mishler questions how different types of researcher-participant interaction either facilitate or hinder the participants' ability to make sense of what is happening to them and around them and what impact different forms of inquiry will have on the participants' understanding of themselves and their world, on their ultimate empowerment or feelings of alienation.*
>
> *In this regard, the researcher will attempt to collaboratively construct and negotiate relationships of mutuality and equality with the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Therefore in its conception, a guiding focus of the inquiry will be the creation of that middle space we seek to understand, within the context of the research community we form.*

Research Journal: Finished with preparations for our meeting, time once more ticked slowly by as I paused to consider that everyone who was coming knew more about me than I knew about them. They had all read my proposal and thereby been granted greater access to my thoughts and feelings, than I had been granted to theirs. This left me feeling both transparent and vulnerable.

Reflective Turn: I wonder about the issue of power in the research relationship, a concern expressed by a number of researchers (Miller, 1990). However, in my understanding, these concerns are presupposed by the assumption that the balance of power is held by the university researcher rather than by the teachers involved in the study. My feelings of unease left me unsure if this issue could be so easily dichotomized or understood.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) helped me name this discomfort. In looking at how we might "compose professional and personal lives that connect what has often been divided" (p. xi) in educational practice and scholarship, they questioned the traditional "outside-in" approach to knowledge and proposed an "inside-outside" perspective which positions both teachers and researchers as knowers, with neither occupying a privileged position. They stated that "because teacher research interrupts traditional assumptions about knowers, knowing, and what can be known about teaching, it has the potential to redefine the notion of a knowledge base for teaching and to challenge the university's hegemony in the generation of expert knowledge for the field" (p. xiv).

Knowing the question for this research inquiry originated with the telling of my own teacher stories, and anticipating the meaning which will be made as other teachers tell their stories, I wonder why teachers have continued to let themselves be positioned as received knowers as the university researchers have held the role of expert. Connelly & Clandinin (1990), have said "in the process of living the narrative inquiry, the place and voice of researcher and teacher become less defined by role" (p. 10), and express the concern rather that the research relationship and the research story make a place for the voices of all participants to be heard.

Research Journal: The silence that could not be filled with the noise of television was gratefully interrupted by the ringing phone. As I jumped to answer it, I wondered if someone would be missing from our first meeting and was relieved when Lisa explained that she was going to be a little late but disappointed to hear that Curtis would not be coming with her. My disappointment at not having the opportunity to meet Curtis surprised me since I had never communicated with him and had agreed to make him welcome at Lisa's request. Without a face, he had been in my research picture and I had looked forward to the "thoughtful contributions" Lisa said he would make to our group. She had also said that he might enjoy being part of a group that would address issues often left undiscussed in the busy milieu of school. Having often felt this way myself, I could identify with this need and was pleased with the possibility that we might become a community in which our individual and collective needs could be met. I decided not to take his plate from the stack that sat ready on the table, maybe he would come next time. I wanted to keep his spot open for now. "What does a little late matter?" I thought.

### .... Small talk and safe talk

Research Journal:[6] This early attention to the importance or lack of importance of time was to be prophetic as time became an issue which surfaced repeatedly in our research group and in the stories we told. It became a factor to consider almost immediately as I attempted to create a collaborative research milieu while sticking to my predetermined schedule. Collaboration is relational and building relationships is an ongoing process. It takes time to get to know others, to establish trust and to commit to mutually constructed goals. However, the ever present demands of a doctoral research agenda and a very limited amount of time to complete this type of research, requires those who want to work collaboratively to try to abbreviate this process if they can not extend the time they will spend together. But even when some participants genuinely desire to be "helpful to the doctoral student," and try to shorten time needed for trust to develop, others will volunteer personally revealing information much more slowly. It is not surprising that participants might withhold potentially important information because they do not yet feel safe to disclose it, leading one to wonder how valid "the findings" will be under these conditions and making time for later reflection and restorying a necessary component of the research process. But if participants disclose personal information more quickly than they would under circumstances where trust is built in a reciprocal relationship of self disclosure, one wonders how vulnerable the participants might be both in the group and in the published findings.

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[6] Excerpt from Schroeder, D. "Working it out: Negotiating Collaborative Research," a paper presented at CSSE, Calgary, AB., June, 1994.

At our first meeting, Margaret identified both time and relationship as concerns. She said under normal circumstances she would not say the things she was saying until a trusting relationship had been established, but because our time was to be so limited she was not going to waste it by engaging in the usual rituals of small talk and safe talk. However, in doing this she was putting herself in a vulnerable position, and as the person the university held ultimately responsible for ensuring the research participants were protected, she was putting me in an equally vulnerable position of hoping her trust was not being misplaced. In reading and re-reading transcripts however, it became apparent that although we did engage in serious discussion very rapidly, we did not dispense with small talk and safe talk and they became the threads which connected us into a collaborative and supportive group.

Reflective Turn: Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) identified time as a critical factor in the "formation and maintenance of learning communities for teacher research" (p. 91), and said that sufficient time is important to both the group's ability to develop commitment to the project and to work through difficult issues, as well as to develop the trust necessary for raising sensitive issues. Hollingsworth (1994) tells the story of transformed practice which resulted from the sustained conversation a group of teacher researchers who met for six years and Miller (1990), notes how over time "the directions of our work as well as the definitions and understandings of our research and collaboration are changing." In her story of a research group which met for nearly three years she said, "We continue to carve out the time that allows us to look and look again. . ." (p. 67).

Research Journal: Although I had invited only women to participate in our group, it had not been a conscious decision on my part to exclude men from this conversation. I quelled my slight apprehension when Lisa suggested she bring Curtis and made preparations to welcome him. Nevertheless at subsequent meetings, I could not deny a certain satisfaction that this had become a women's group nor could I help but wonder how our conversations might have been different if we had had a male in our midst.

Reflective Turn: Reporting on her research on gender and language, Tannen (1990), a sociolinguist, suggests the theory of male dominance is not the whole story nor does it account for everything that happens to men and women who are attempting to relate to each other in conversation. She found "boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, so talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication" (p. 18). Whereas "women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy. . . men speak and hear a language of status and independence" (p.42). Even boys and girls in the same house grow up "in different worlds of words" (p. 43). She says, since we all want "to be heard - but not merely to be heard. . . to be understood - heard for what we think we are saying, for what we know we meant" (p. 48) we will need to become bilingual if we are going to communicate.

Historically women have been perceived as talking too much, yet Tannen reports that "study after study finds that it is men who talk more - at meetings, in mixed-group discussions, and in classrooms where girls or young women sit next to boys or young men" (p. 75). She also found differences in the content of their talk. She named men's language of conversation "report - talk" because it occurs in public situations and meets the male objective of preserving independence and negotiating status, and women's conversation "rapport - talk". Women's conversation which is primarily private speaking is a a way of "establishing connections and negotiating relationships" (p. 77).

### .... A mutually satisfying relationship

> Research Proposal: (pp. 30, 31) *But, I must stop to ask, why would teachers take time from their already busy schedules to become involved in yet another commitment? Why would they agree to tell their private stories in public, stories that might be as painful for them to think about as my story of Stephen is for me? What benefit could they perceive this collaborative inquiry to have for them? Why might they want to engage in a research*

> *relationship which might have "little validation within their own knowledge context"? (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a). These questions make me wonder, who are the teachers who will make this commitment? And the answer is I do not yet know who they are, even though I think I can understand why some will choose to become involved, why some will choose to become part of a group that will seek a deeper understanding of the context that they work in and that will try to influence that world through shared meaning and mutual concern. I know that some of these teachers might be those who themselves have experienced the dilemmas and struggles which I have shared. I know that some of these teachers might be those who have been seen as resistant to change imposed from above. I know that some of these teachers might be those who welcome the space to be heard, the space to listen, the space to reconstruct, the space to form a community with others who like themselves desire to promote "the growth of those for whom we care" (Mayeroff, 1971) and who are committed to the reflexive improvement of curriculum theory and classroom practice (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994a).*

Research Journal: [7] As I engage in collaborative research, my responsibility as a researcher is not only to adhere to those ethical guidelines I submitted with my proposal but to continue these ethical deliberations within the research relationship and the larger research community throughout the research process. To this end, I am committed to engaging in a process of ongoing reflection.

When I was writing my proposal, I thought I had satisfactorily addressed the question of why teachers would want to be involved in this study in a section of my proposal which was subtitled "A context of commitment". I went through candidacy and possibly into the second week of research believing that this was a question I had answered. But although I had answered it thoughtfully at that time, it was never resolved and five months later, I continue to ask: "Why would teachers take time from their already busy schedules to become involved in yet another commitment? Why would they agree to tell their private stories in public, stories that might be as painful for them to think about as my story of Stephen is for me? What benefit could they perceive this collaborative inquiry to have for them? These questions make me wonder, who are the teachers who will make this commitment" (Schroeder, 1992).

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[7] Excerpts from Schroeder's (1992) research proposal and paper: "Collaborative Research: Exploitation or Enrichment," presented by Debra Schroeder and Kathie Webb at the Among Teachers' Community and Pre-CATE Conference in Ottawa, Ontario, June 8, 9, 1993.

These questions lead me to ask, "Is our research relationship enriching, is it developmental for all participants, or despite my best efforts does it contain elements of exploitation that I need to explore in the specific context of my own research and in the more general context of collaboration and narrative research in teacher education?" Part of our evolving understanding of collaboration leads me to tell a story of mutual but not necessarily equal commitment to the research question and the research relationship. This understanding also leads me to explore the work and time that individual research participants give to the research and the collaborative relationship.

While I worry that when the collaboration and writing is over I will be the one who will have the tangible reward - a degree - the members of this group who share an interest in the topic and the collaborative relationship said they do not "want the work of the dissertation writing." Furthermore, they have have expressed concern over all of the work I am undertaking in transcribing the group's conversations. I, however, feel grateful that busy teachers have come together to research the middle space and am glad they find the transcripts helpful. I just hope the others are "getting as much from these meetings as I am". Group members have expressed gratitude that I have provided an opportunity for them to create a middle space as they find our conversations professionally enriching. From conversations like these, I am able to see that questions of enrichment and exploitation can not be dichotomised or answered only once. Collaborative research relationships require reflective re-negotiation and sensitivity to the participants' stories throughout the research process if they are to be mutually enriching.

### .... Entering into the research conversation

Research Journal: A knock at my door surprised me. Access to my apartment was restricted by security and no one had called me to open the door. Margaret, a grade two-three teacher, stood in the hall probably a little surprised at my surprise to see her there unannounced. I had not met Margaret previously, but had talked to her twice on the phone at the suggestion of a mutual colleague who had read my research proposal and thought that Margaret would be able to offer much to the collaborative research endeavour I was proposing and that she might enjoy this opportunity for continued reflection on her own professional context. Despite this limited contact, she did not seem like a stranger to me and throughout the evening I became convinced that a mutual need to construct a safe space for teachers to communicate about matters of professional significance was a bond that we all shared. But perhaps it was her willingness to be personal as revealed by her shared dismay over a new hair style and concern about my grandson's health that quickly broke the ice for our ensuing discussion and confirmed for me that although I could help set the context for the collaboration I hoped would occur within this study, this responsibility would ultimately be one shared by all the members of the group.

Anne, a kindergarten teacher on leave for this year, arrived shortly after Margaret and I had begun to visit. This was also my first meeting with Anne as her husband, a fellow graduate student, had suggested she might like to be involved in this research project after one of our discussions and I had only talked to her briefly on the phone to confirm this desire and to arrange the date of our first meeting. Perhaps, because of my acquaintance with her husband and consequently some knowledge of Anne's history, I felt like I was meeting someone to whom I had already been introduced. She, on the other hand, had two of us to meet as she came into the room and I hoped that she would feel welcome. Despite being a little flustered that she had forgotten her purse at home and needed to borrow money to park, Anne entered into conversation with us easily and her dilemma (although no doubt embarrassing for her at this first meeting) contributed to the personal connection we were able to establish so quickly. As we identified with her predicament, I thought about how our common experiences contribute to the ways in which we come to know each other, ourselves and the world. How could we believe that we could keep ourselves out of the research process even if we were so inclined, or divorce ourselves from who we are as human beings in our attempts to know?

Lisa, a grade six teacher just back in the classroom after completing her M.Ed. degree, arrived soon after Anne. Since we were acquainted and had been involved in several discussions together I assumed she would feel quite comfortable, so after a quick introduction, I retreated to the kitchen to finish supper. I could hear the conversation as the three women continued to get to know one another and wondered if Lisa's comfort in this situation was affected by her own recent research and her familiarity with research groups, by her personality, by her prior acquaintance with me, or just by her desire to continue the reflective thinking she had become accustomed to in her time at university. I thought about how much our experience of the present is shaped by that of our past.

Kelly, the final member of our group, had not yet arrived so I decided to call her to see if she was still able to come. Receiving no answer, I concluded that she was either on her way or that something had detained her elsewhere and therefore decided I should serve supper. Although I was not entirely satisfied with this decision and did not want Kelly to feel uncomfortable when she arrived, I realized that we needed to begin as everyone was getting hungry and time was limited. However, my unease continued as we ate. I hoped that Kelly had not had second thoughts about joining the research group as I knew she had expressed some reservations which I wanted her to share with the group as we attempted to construct our mutual expectations of "good company" and worked toward establishing an agreement of participation. Since Kelly had had a very recent experience with feelings of hurt and anger as she saw her work misinterpreted and used in ways she had not sanctioned, I knew we would all benefit from hearing her story. I was sure Kelly would have talked to me if she had changed her mind, but with my two week absence she would have had no opportunity to discuss any change of plans with me. I hoped there was some other explanation as to why she had not yet arrived. I realized that the absence of different group members was a reality we would have to face during the research process but was not yet sure how this would be resolved or if it would be something significant to consider.

Therefore, although supper was finished, I was still hesitant to begin our discussion. I had avoided talking about either my proposed research or the research group to the individual participants as I called each person to arrange our first meeting. Although they had all been given a copy of my proposal and the ethical guidelines, I wanted them to feel they were joint constructors and collaborators in this inquiry and that their voices would all be heard. I also wanted to ensure that their inclusion in our research community was not inhibited by the unequal distribution of information or by any negative feelings that could be engendered by "arriving late".

### .... Ethical considerations: Honouring each other's presence

Nevertheless, I also felt the responsibility to use our time together productively so with some misgiving, I began the discussion by introducing the topic of informed participation and possible ethical guidelines for the operation of a collaborative research group. As I explained the need for us to construct a mutually agreeable participant consent form and we discussed what should be included, it became apparent that all members of the group felt ongoing flexibility in this process was essential. This flexibility was seen to encompass the nature of each person's participation in oral and written form, the parts of our conversations which would remain confidential and the interpretation of the stories and conversation that occurred. It was also noted that trust among participants was of primary importance as teachers are in need of a space in which they can discuss concerns without fear of reprisal. Matters of confidentiality and the right to be identified in the research document were discussed but remained open to negotiation.

> Research Proposal: (pp. 32 - 34) *How do we as teachers, teacher researchers, and researchers of teachers respond to the ethical questions? How do we tell our stories? How do we respond to the people who bring us their stories and the stories they tell? As Coles (1989) has reminded us, the people who bring us their stories "hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly" (p. 7). However, even if this is our*

*desire, how can we ensure that our interpretation will reflect the truth of another's life?*

*In this research study I will try to facilitate this understanding through the processes of collaborative inquiry and group writing which will provide many opportunities for the participants to tell and retell their stories in a context built on mutual trust and regard. Participation in the study will be voluntary as is the sharing of all stories, so group members will have control over their contributions to this study. Further to this, stories and dialogue will not be combined in a single narrative but will instead be presented as concrete portrayals of experience, as I want to make certain that the voices we are endeavoring to hear are not once more silenced or blended beyond recognition (Coles, 1989; Miller, 1990), although a collaborative story may also be told. Participants will therefore be given the opportunity to have their voices identified in the written presentation (Mishler, 1989). However, as in the Miller study (1990), group members will, at the same time, be offered the protection of anonymity if they wish to protect their own privacy or the privacy of any individual named in their stories. These decisions will not be made prior to the study but rather as participants have sufficient information and understanding of the process to assess the implications of their choices and to give informed-consent. If for any reason, a participant reverses a previous decision every attempt will be made to comply with the latest request in the written presentation. Participants will have the right to opt out of the study at any time.*

*Once a story has been publicly told we might question who then owns the story and its interpretation? Although this is an interesting consideration and it may be stated that since the research story is mutually constructed the researcher has as much ownership of it as do the participants (Noddings, 1986), for the purposes of this study the original teller or author of each story will be given final responsibility to authorize its inclusion in the research report. Group conversation and interpretation will also be included upon the recommendation of participants who have had the opportunity to review and respond to drafts during the writing process. Even though the group will thus function in an editorial position and within its self-determined context of ethical conduct, prior to the study all participants will be informed how their stories, taped conversations, and shared journal entries could be used in the process of inquiry. Any written records, recorded tapes and computer disks will be held in confidentiality.*

Research Journal:[8] The research participation agreement, which all group members signed after reading the proposal and meeting for the first time, included my application for ethical review. This application was based on the principle of informed consent and was granted on the basis that the study would pose no significant risks to the participants. Two concerns with the university's present ethical guidelines as they relate to collaborative narrative research became apparent during the course of this study. Since collaborative narrative research is an evolving process, the concept of gaining informed consent as a means of ensuring ethical conduct of the researcher or protecting the research participants is limiting. In the context of this research study, informed consent was reconstructed through conversations which attempted to broaden our existing understanding of this concept. It was not seen as something that could be given a priori, but as something that required renegotiation throughout the life of the project. Nor was the stipulation that a person in the research could withdraw without penalty at any point considered to be adequate. Rather, an ongoing understanding of what it meant to be a participant in the research process was desired and an ongoing commitment to participate was sought. My second concern with the guidelines governing this doctoral research arose from the principle that research which is ethical does not harm research participants. I questioned if not doing harm was a sufficient goal to strive for in a research agenda based on collaborative narrative research. If I was to engage teachers in an ongoing collaborative research process which required them to commit significant amounts of time to the joint construction of knowledge, it seemed that I also needed to ask questions about the potential benefits to the involved teachers. It did not seem morally sufficient that participating in this research not do harm to the teachers nor that our main goal be to contribute to the knowledge in the field! Our research, if based on Noddings' notion of fidelity to persons, needed to answer critical questions of how we could care for all persons in the research and how being involved in this project would be of benefit to the participants. It needed, in other words, to push back the boundaries currently framing our understanding of ethical conduct. It needed to create a space where our moral actions and understanding reflected our faithfulness to persons in the research, rather than an imposed sense of duty or an abstract moral principle (Noddings, 1986). In our research group, I initially established the concept of "Good Company" as a way for us to begin to think morally about the research methodology, our group's interaction and the writing and presentation of the final research report.

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[8] Excerpt from Schroeder, D. "Working It Out: Negotiating Collaborative Research," paper presented at CSSE, Calgary, AB. June 1994.

Reflective Turn: If the participants are to feel enriched by the research process, they must feel they have had the opportunity to tell their stories on their own terms and that these stories are heard and interpreted and retold in such a way that they resonate with the teller's experience rather than the researcher's or the group's agenda. However, as Anderson and Jack (1991) found, as they conducted and taped oral history interviews as a way of "generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds" (p. 11), this meant they had to learn to listen in stereo. This stereophonic listening became particularly important in situations where women's experiences were at variance with men's because at these times, "a woman's discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men's dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman's personal experience" (p. 11). In looking at the work of Heilbrun, Anderson and Jack say that since "women often mute their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conventions", if we want to hear the private story embedded in the more acceptable public story we have to listen for the choices, the pain and the stories "that lie beyond the 'constraints of acceptable discussion' " (p. 11).

As I am engaged in writing our research story, I keep wondering how my interpretation and reinterpretation of our stories and conversations will be received by the participants. I know I have pushed some of these past the boundaries their tellers may have initially envisioned as I have listened for the stereophonic quality in the voices of both individuals and the group. But in this effort I need to keep asking myself, am I returning the stories in good company?

Research Journal: My proposed objectives, which included providing participating teachers with a place to meet, dinner, transcripts of all sessions, as well as with the invitation to collaboratively construct a professional development milieu which was personally and professionally relevant, were an attempt to address the concern that the research not only be free from harm for those involved but that it be situated in a context of caring and directed by a belief that educational research to be ethical must also concern itself with the benefits it can offer to the participants. I also came to understand that the benefits of being involved would not be the same for each teacher-researcher. Since we all came to the group with our own personal and professional needs and since these needs did not necessarily remain constant throughout the research process, what would be of benefit to Lisa might be different from what would be of benefit to Kelly, Anne, Margaret or myself at any given time. Therefore, if we were to honour each person's presence in our group and care for each person, the group needed to be continually sensitive to each person's evolving agenda and open to changing the focus of our conversation. It soon became apparent that creating this middle space in our group depended on this caring response to each other and in this way became part of what we came to know and name as the middle space. Further discussions which asked how this research might benefit participants included planning for the possibility of being named rather than anonymous in the final research report and has extended to include a plan to write the final research report in a way that honours the multiple stories and interpretations we have constructed rather than to produce a document which melds our individual voices into one common story. However, while considering that collaborative research which is designed to be of benefit to teachers might require providing the opportunity for more than one person to author the final research report this was not seen as either mandatory or preferable. Further to this consideration, questions of who owns the research data and whether all participants have the right to use jointly constructed data as approved by the group remains unanswered.

# PART II.

# COLLABORATIVE WORK: CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE MIDDLE SPACE

## ....A space for our stories

Research Proposal: (pp. 31, 32) *I will encourage participants to share oral or written stories of personal experience and although I expect that as we begin to talk experience will be shared through the stories we tell (Clandinin and Connelly, 1993 a), I do not anticipate that each teacher will necessarily come to every meeting with a prepared story. I think that rather these stories will be both remembered and shared during our ongoing dialogue and that as they are told these stories will provide us with accounts of individual experience for our ongoing conversation and understanding of the middle space. I also expect that our personal stories will be retold in light of new understanding and that our collaborative story will be constructed as our stories are told and retold. As field texts become research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), both the participants and the researcher's story will finally be presented to the public in a manner approved by the storytellers and the storytelling group.*

*During the first phase of inquiry, group sessions will be recorded and complete transcripts will be made of "telling stories" and conversations. These transcripts will be provided to the participants between sessions and portions of the taped sessions will be replayed throughout the study as I expect that we will want to reflect on both stories we have told and our attempts to construct meaning during this process of inquiry. Toward this end all participants will be encouraged to keep a journal during this study and to share any reflections they wish to with the group (Miller, 1990). As Coles (1989) has pointed out "every reader's response to a writer's call can have its own startling, suggestive power" (p. xix) and as such will be valued and explored in the course of this inquiry. In addition to keeping my own journal of field notes and reflections, in the traditions of collaborative narrative inquiry and hermeneutic phenomenology, I will begin the writing of descriptions, stories, conversations and interpretations of the middle space as well as "our research story" during the process of inquiry. This writing of the research text will thus become part of the process of understanding the*

> *lived experience of space as well as another story for reflection on the lived space of practicing teachers.*
>
> *If the personal experiences of teachers are to be explored, this inquiry must encompass the stories that we tell each other as we seek to make, remake and communicate meaning in our teaching lives. For if the questions I seek to explore have arisen out of my concern that there be space for the sacred story of each individual in the public world of school, how can I morally suspend this concern in my search to know what this space is?*

Research Journal: I am wondering about the place of journals in the research process. I have found that embedding my research journal in the transcripts is far more satisfying than keeping it as a separate document. Layering our conversations with reflections somehow seems more fitting than keeping a somewhat remote and outside the research commentary. I want the group members to know what I'm thinking. I don't want them to think I'm taking their stories away from them and submitting them to some specialized treatment in an uncontaminated and inaccessible area. Because I'm the one typing the transcripts, it is easy for me to include these emerging thoughts and perceptions for everyone to read and talk back to. It's not as easy for the others but I'm trying to include everyone's reflections in the second typing of the transcripts.

Reflective Turn: In her collaborative work with five teachers, Janet Miller (1990), used journals as another context for group dialogue. Noting the benefits of using dialogue journals with students, Miller proposed the process could also be of benefit to teachers who were engaged in constructing emancipatory conceptions of teaching and research. However, even though she initially thought the participants would read and respond to each other's journals they did not choose to do this and shared their journals only with her, although they did share selected entries with each other in their group meetings. It is interesting to note that each of these teachers used journal writing in a slightly different way as they pursued individual agendas within the group setting.

Research Journal: Although the teachers in our group did have individual concerns and agendas they storied out in our conversations, the time we spent in our group meetings was more directly related to working toward a common goal than to pursuing our separate paths. I wonder if this is why we are more content "talking it out together" in the middle space we are constructing in our group than we are in retreating to a private space where we would once more be in the place of "working it out alone". Our stories have lived in the private world for too long, we want to tell and retell them in a public place, a middle space. We have lived alone for too long and we long for a middle space.

### .... I think: Therefore I am

I think
I think
And I think
Therefore,
I am starved
Starved for the voice of intelligent conversation
Starved for the vision of human collaboration
Starved for the aroma of radical debate
Starved for the flavour of enjoyed reminiscence
Starved for the touch of your response.
I think
I think
And I think
Therefore,
I am once again
The young mother
Prisoner of silence,
Loneliness and thought
And I am starved
For the company of you
To talk, to listen
To dream, to plan
To touch my soul
To confirm
That I Am.
(Schroeder, 1993c)

Reflective Turn:[9] Teachers tell stories to other teachers. They also tell selected stories to parents. Other stories are told only to spouses or close companions. But many teaching stories are never told and most teachers would not consider naming storytelling or the construction and reconstruction of stories as a way of organizing their experiences or constructing their knowledge (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Neither would they readily associate the experience of storytelling with professional development or educational research. In our society, the folkloral voice (Sewall, 1994) does not speak with the same authority as the scientific one, nor does it command as great an audience in the institutions of knowledge. Therefore, it is not surprising that most teachers do not come to value the telling and retelling of stories as significant avenues for learning, or to regard narrative as anything other than a vehicle for the casual recounting of humorous or horrific events in their classrooms. They have not gathered round to participate in the creation of meaning that becomes possible within a collaborative, responsive, storytelling community. Nor have they found an audience to listen and respond to their stories in ways that would validate their embodied knowledge (Johnson, 1987).

Personal, professional and public neglect of teachers' stories has lead both teachers and researchers to conclude that the construction of these stories is unimportant to both the generation of pedagogical knowledge and the practice of teaching, and by reason of this conclusion, to act as if stories of teaching (and research) are not worthy of telling or hearing. Acting on this belief, teachers become separated from what it is they know. They come to believe that they are not the ones who know. They become silenced, and they allow others to frame and tell their stories in ways that are foreign to their experience and bear little resemblance to their classrooms. At the same time they engage in professional development activities which discount their stories and encourage them to be passive consumers rather than co-constructors of knowledge.

Living for years as students and teachers in environments that had shut out our voices, our work together arose out of a shared need to story and restory our own life experiences as learners and as teachers as well as out of a need to challenge the traditional curriculum and the schooling experience (Minnich, 1990; Martin, 1994). Feeling diminished by an educational process that was in theory supposed to expand our minds and open the doors of possibility, our work together arose out of a need to address deficit models of professional development (Schroeder, 1988a) and teacher education and to challenge the hierarchical structures of knowledge and knowledge institutions especially as they impacted upon the research we engaged in. Being in daily contact with students who were disempowered by an arbitrary and patriarchal splitting of home and school, of school and world at large, our work together arose out of the need to "...open such spheres, such spaces, where a better state of things can be imagined..." (Greene 1986, p. 441).

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[9] Excerpt from Schroeder, D. "Collaborative narrative inquiry: Fidelity and the ethics of caring in teacher research," a paper presented at AERA, New Orleans, LO., April, 1994.

### .... The stories we choose to tell

Reflective Turn: Kincheloe (1992, p. 1) has said that,

> The questions we raise, the debates in which we engage about education are ultimately questions and debates about the stories we choose to give meaning to our lives. In our autobiographical stories we become heroes or heroines who act on particular understandings of why we are here, what demands our attention, and what is insignificant (Postman, 1989, p. 122) In our stories about what constitutes a good society, an ethical act, an authentic way of being human, the sub-story of education takes shape (Giroux and McLaren, 1989, p. xii).

Research Journal: What stories do I choose to tell? What meanings do I construct? Although *Stephen's Story*[10] helped me frame the question of middle space and drew others into the research conversation, I did not write *Stephen's Story* in conscious awareness of all of the issues it now seems to speak to nor for some time did I realize this was not only Stephen's story I was telling. While I knew this was not the story Stephen would have told of his morning in school, I nevertheless felt my account reconstructed his experience from the perspectives of all those who were present in the room. However, as I read and reread this story I saw that it embodied the dissatisfaction and dilemmas that so often confronted me in my classroom. In attempting to share a glimpse into a child's experience of school, I unwittingly opened the window on our school experiences wider than I planned. *Stephen's Story* allowed me to name an experience, to share an experience. It allowed me to construct meaning even as it gave me a middle space to paint a still life that I could return to again and again, that I could reconstruct again and again. From within this story, I was able to ask questions that concerned me about the curriculum. I was able to question how children experience the place of school and the process of schooling. From within this story, I was able to imagine structures that would facilitate rather than hinder students' development. I was also able to foresee a future where these new structures - if mandated - might lock once again into barred windows and closed doors. But as I watched Stephen I could see between the bars, I could see windows into his home and into the world. I could see windows of hope. From within *Stephen's Story*, I could begin to imagine curriculum in these spaces and within this possibility. I went into the research process thinking that the knowledge and understanding necessary to create this middle space would come from telling the stories of many other children in our classrooms.

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[10] Stephen's Story which appears in chapter one of this thesis was first published in 1989.

### .... A space to imagine new stories

Research Journal: However, during the first two meetings of our group, as I listened to the stories we shared, I began to suspect that the stories we told were not just stories of specific children in our rooms. I began to suspect that we were also telling and retelling our own stories as teachers and learners in the multiple classrooms of our lives and that it was these stories we needed to hear. Stephen's story was my story. It was rooted in the autobiography of my past, lived out in an ever changing present, and central to my vision of a transformed future.

I began to suspect that we were telling stories of policy, power and control as well as of pedagogy and practice. In these ways, Stephen and the many other children we storied and restoried were integral to our individual and collective stories. However, it is not their stories but our stories we seek to construct and to reconstruct in and through our collaborative storytelling group. These stories not only lead us to know ourselves through reflective and reconstructive processes but more importantly, they lead us to actively engage in the both understanding and creating spaces where teachers and students can be themselves, where teachers and students can learn and grow, where teachers and students can begin to imagine educational alternatives.

Middle space is a narrative constructivist space. Our stories are told in the middle space we create, but telling our stories also creates a middle space. Freeing us from a landscape of abstractions, our stories name individuals and trace relationships as they speak to the specific experiences of students and teachers rather than of generic populations and generalizable results. In stories which reflect the contradictions and ambiguities of our lives, we are far removed from notions of a unitary or universal truth. Speaking of the individual, the specific, the concrete, our stories remain open to a multiplicity of interpretations, reinterpretations and beginnings.

## .... Reconstructing our conversations

At our second meeting, I reported that the transcripts from the first meeting were unavailable due to a mechanical problem with the tape recorder. Margaret asked if this meant that we had to say "*exactly the same thing as we said last week?*" (Transcripts: p. 6). As we laughed about the impossibility of this task, I shared my experience of trying to reconstruct our conversation, and my dismay that my retelling was *"so impoverished compared to the conversation I remembered"* (Transcripts: p. 9). Although this experience was very frustrating at the time, as I restoried it in subsequent tellings, it served to remind me once again of the constructive and reconstructive processes at work in our story telling and in our efforts to create meaning. I no longer had the feeling that the story as told the first time was the "true" version nor that the story as a carefully crafted piece could in some way get us closer to the "truth". I challenged epistemology and methodology that construed our conversations and stories - the research data - as fixed and immutable.

As Margaret shared her journal account of our first meeting which was so different from mine: *Had a meeting with Debbie, a Ph.D. candidate at the university. She is writing about middle space and what that means to teachers. It was quite fascinating being with teachers who share my frustrations and difficulties with the process and being women and mothers. Naturally I talked too much. (Laughter) That's all I wrote. It was very little cause it was too late.* I was freed from believing we would construct a unified story told from a single vantage point. I was freed from wanting to do this. Each telling and each retelling spoke to our past experiences in a slightly different way even as they coalesced to change both our present understanding and our future perceptions.

Reflective Turn: The work of Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) helps me understand the multiple perspectives which inform our telling, living and understanding and, in so doing, helps me challenge the notion of a unitary truth that can be revealed. Bateson says,

> Composing a life is a little like making a Middle Eastern pastry, in which the butter must be layered in by repeated folding, or like making a samurai sword, whose layers of differently tempered metal are folded over and over. As a young college student, Joan knew with certainty that she was a dancer. Over time, this identity has meant being a teacher and a therapist, a wife and a mother, a craftswoman and a writer. From the vantage point of a seventeen year old, this would have looked like a jumble; seen now, from her eighties, it makes sense (Bateson, 1990, p. 214).

Research Journal: On the evening of our third meeting, Margaret, Lisa, Kelly and Anne came eagerly into my apartment. They had hardly hung up their coats before they headed into the living room to pick up the transcripts of our previous three hour conversation. Soon, their talk which had been lively, died out as one by one they began to read. At first there were a few remarks being made as they remembered something we had discussed, but suddenly even these intermittent comments ceased and an unnatural silence seemed to pervade the room. I was beginning to wonder whether I should interrupt - as I intuitively knew what the participants were thinking - but each person seemed to want to continue with her own silent reading of the text so I waited patiently and watched as emotions flickered. Finally the tension was abruptly broken as Margaret exclaimed, "I just can't believe I speak like this! I always thought I was an articulate person. I don't think I'll ever say another word."

Transcripts: (p. 72)
M. I'm very conscious of what I'm saying.
D. We should talk about that.
M. About being conscious of what we say?
D. Yes. Margaret looked at the transcripts and she was horrified. She wasn't sure if she was ever going to talk in public again.
M. No, I was so inarticulate.
A. I haven't looked at the transcripts yet.
K. Well, I suppose we can all look at this and say....
M. No, I compared everybody. (Laughter) The only one who came close was Lisa.
L. I've seen myself naked. I know what I look like. (laughter)
K. That's the creative process. I think maybe there should be points for being inarticulate. (Laughter) (I was just horrified.) (Much overlapping talk.) You can't script it, you're messing around with it....
M. But I guess I have this image of myself as being articulate and when I read that I went - oh, oh -wrong!
A. I'm surprised to hear that you feel like that because although I haven't looked at them yet when you speak you come across as very articulate to me.
M. Thank you.
D. Don't forget, when it's written down here it appears one word at a time - every word has equal weighting. But when it's spoken we repeat some of the words or phrases very very quickly. At some places in our conversation, I had to go back three times or more because you spoke so quickly and rephrased so quickly as you were speaking that it was almost impossible to separate all the words. (mmhmm) You think and you rephrase almost at the same time. It comes together so quickly when you are speaking that no one even notices how many reconstructions there are in normal speech, but when it's written down in print - one - word - after - the - other (True) it looks like it took a long time to say it and that it was very inarticulate when it really wasn't heard that way by your audience. ( Really long) I was discussing this at the Centre in our

research group because I had the feeling that this was going to be a concern today and I wanted to think some more about it. In that conversation, I said it seemed to me it was in those places where our speech appeared most fragmented that we were trying to figure something out. (mmmhmm) So as I'm transcribing, those chaotic periods in our speech and in our conversations mark a place that I need to attend to very carefully, because it is in those places that we are trying to construct meaning in and through language and where both our meaning and our language are open to revision and reconstruction. I also found individual instances of this jumbled speech were similar to the places where we as a group all joined together to construct meaning out of chunks of chaotic conversation.

Reflective Turn: As I read this passage, I can't help thinking about the work on chaos. Although chaos theory seems much more applicable to the sciences than to the humanities, there is often something in the appearance of our transcribed language which resembles chaos. I am fascinated by the thought that as a system of meaning, language may be operating by the same rules that other systems within the universe follow. I wonder how such a notion could be embedded within the social construction of knowledge. However, as I look at the following statements, I can see how they might apply at the individual and micro-level to language and at a larger scale to the collaborative research conversation we have had.

Gleick (1987) asks, "Above all, in a universe ruled by entropy, drawing inexorably toward greater and greater disorder, how does order arise?" (p. 7). And in a universe where chaos seems to be everywhere how does structure emerge amidst seemingly random behaviour? Landau presented an image of turbulence as infinite degrees of freedom, the whole spectrum of possibility present at once but Marcus proposed "islands of structure could appear within the disorder". . . and that a complex system could give rise to turbulence and coherence at the same time" (p. 56). Ruelle further hypothesized that infinite possibility was bounded within finite space and saw nature as constrained and disorder "channelled, it seemed, into patterns with some common underlying theme" (p. 152).

Knowing that people long to discover order, patterns and predictable sequences, Yorke said, "The first message is that there is disorder. . . In the past, people have seen chaotic behavior in innumerable circumstances. . .

They try to fix it or they give up. . . They want to discover regularities. . .They explain erratic behavior by saying there's noise" (p. 68). But in chaos there is order; it is stable; it is structured. Chaos is orderly disorder, sensitive to initial conditions and subject to the pull of strange attractors which contain an infinite number of possibilities within finite boundaries.

Packard concluded, "Information has been created and stored in our structure. In the development of one person's mind from childhood, information is clearly not just accumulated but also generated - created from connections that were not there before" (pp. 261 - 262). If we look at Shannon's information theory we find that "ordinary language contains greater than fifty percent redundancy in the form of sounds or letters that are not strictly necessary to conveying a message. . . Ordinary communication depends on redundancy which is "a predictable departure from the random. Part of the redundancy in ordinary language lies in its meaning, and that part is hard to quantify, depending as it does on people's shared knowledge of their language and the world" (p. 256). Shannon stated that "a stream of data in ordinary language is less than random; each new bit is partly constrained by the bits before; thus each new bit carries somewhat less than a bit's worth of real information". . .But "the more random a data stream, the more information would be conveyed by each new bit" (p. 257) However it was the connection of Shannon's information theory to entropy (the slide of a system toward a state of increasing disorder) and the creation of unpredictability which pointed toward the creation of information where none existed. Shaw noted that "as the system becomes chaotic, however, strictly by virtue of its unpredictability, it generates a steady stream of information. Each new observation is a new bit... the flow would be a continuous source of information" (p. 260).

Transcripts: (pp. 174 -176)
D. If we are working from the assumption that a single truth does not exist, that any story we tell could have been told another way or that we could have chosen a totally different story to tell, it becomes apparent that just because we have said something in one way and I have transcribed it, it does not become the truth! Therefore, when the final report is written, we can continue to revise and to write it in language which is readable and acceptable. We do not have to present our written language in exactly the same format as it first appeared

as if we have discovered some precious thing that must be captured and preserved verbatim because if we report it in any other way it will be distorted and no longer the truth. If we say that we are constructing knowledge, we can keep on constructing it. We do not just (stop - right there) stop the minute it is first spoken. (laughter)

*Anne's Reflection: I hope you do not feel you need to keep our language exactly the same as it was said. Mine sounds so disjointed - full of likes and ya's - I feel this is not helpful to anyone reading it! But I see how that kind of thinking (the sacred story of objective knowledge) pervades our thinking and influences the practice of research.*

### .... The practice of improvisation

Research Journal: I know some of you are still concerned about the transcripts. But as I continue to think about this, when "we go to print" there is nothing that will keep us from rewriting any conversational examples to a form more suitable to the original speaker. These words that are transcribed are not the truth that we can not alter for fear of perjuring our results. We need to come out from under the umbrella of the scientific paradigm with its belief in objectivity and from the constraints it imposes on our research and on our language. These transcripts are just part of the ongoing and ever changing construction and reconstruction of our stories and our lives. We are within both our autobiographical and narrative rights to assert that neither this project nor the rewriting of our lives is something that is finished either when the words first leave our lips in halting phrases, or when we publish in hopefully more pleasing prose. There will always be something else we could have said, some other way we could have said it. So we need to keep reminding ourselves and each other that these transcripts are not the end but the beginning and on some occasions perhaps the middle of our attempts to understand our teaching, our dilemmas and the middle space.

*Anne's Reflection: Thank you. Yes, I agree!*

Reflective Turn: Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) speaks to the arts of improvisation "which involve recombining partly familiar materials in new ways, often in ways especially sensitive to context, interaction, and response"... through "varying and revarying familiar phrases." She also speaks of the practice of improvisation in jazz - which "is at once individual and communal, performance that is both repetitive and innovative, each participant sometimes providing background support and sometimes flying free" - in languages - where "each speaker learns to combine and vary familiar components to say something new to fit a particular context and evoke a particular response, sometimes something of very great beauty or significance, but always improvisational and always adaptive" and in life - where "we combine familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations, following an underlying grammar and an evolving aesthetic" to create like a poem, "a certain balance and diversity, a certain coherence and fit" (pp. 2 - 3).

As I reflect once more on our conversation, I wonder if the space which encompasses the tentativeness, turmoil, transition and transformation that we engage in as we work to construct knowledge and language to speak it is not also the middle space we are seeking to understand - a middle space where knowledge is created as we individually and collectively try to figure out the world. Is the middle space the space between not knowing and knowing, the space inside a spiral of learning where our new understanding becomes that which we will now question as our knowledge evolves and as it remains ever open to construction and reconstruction, to improvisation and the practice of improvisation, to interpretation and reinterpretation? If this image of middle space captured in the improvisational speech of our conversations and the collaboration of our storytelling group, could be seen in our classrooms what would it look like in the relationships between people and in the construction of curriculum?

Transcripts: (pp. 45 - 47)

D. Kelly, I liked what you had at the top of the paper you were working on yesterday - that it was a work in progress (Oh, yes.) and that although you are going to share it, you are still working on this piece. (mm)...

K. Some people in the group I was discussing this particular piece in, didn't get it. They didn't understand that it was a work in progress. This caused problems because some of them responded like this was the finished, the final product which was difficult for me to understand when I thought I'd stated that it was not. But I think some people only see what you have on paper and if you have fifteen pages, while they may think you don't have the ending written yet - they do think it should be almost complete. (mmhmm) So we have this preconceived idea that once something is in print - especially if it appears to be fairly long - it is a finished product.

M. Does that come from the idea that you only show people your best work, that we don't normally show things that we are working on?

K. Mmmhmm, I guess that's what I'm tying it into because I do remember telling them: this is the way I write. This is what I have on the computer right now. I also have, like I told you yesterday Debbie, meat ends. I have about ten other pages of meat ends that I have just put aside for the moment that I may still want to consider, but this is my present construction and I would appreciate it if at this point you see something that I could add or whatever - just comments to kind of help me along the way. And that's what I thought this writing and this sharing was. Most other people brought about two pages. I brought fifteen pages - my work in progress, right now. But many of them had brought what they thought were two perfect pages. It just was so different, because I don't work that way.

M. I don't know if there is ever anything that is your finished work. (I don't know) You may put your writing down today but next week when you pick it up you still find something that you want to rethink and rewrite. Your experience of working with people who view things from such a different perspective, who seem incapable of understanding the rules you work by, reminds me of an experience I've had repeatedly with my husband. Let me tell you a story.

*I've been married for thirteen years and for the first eleven years I never won a single argument. Never. Because as soon as the discussion began, we would go into his (my husband's) formula for arguing. With his methodology for conducting a rational argument being unquestioningly accepted as right, mine was always wrong. Until I realized that as long as we continued to argue according to his rules and criteria he would always come out the winner, I could never win. If there is only one way in which logic is perceived then of course if you think differently you are not going to be able to sound coherent according to that framework.*

Research Journal: If there is a way of doing research that is accepted by the research community as the right way, people doing research in the traditional way can proceed without thinking about what they are doing and why they are doing it that way. Their research papers do not begin with lengthy explanations intended to establish the validity of the scientific methodology nor with their reasons for choosing this methodology. But research done by any of the competing or alternate methodologies always begin with explanations and justifications.

So Kelly, if there's only one accepted way of writing, then of course you're not going to be able to convince people that your work is in progress and you are open to suggestions and reinterpretations when they view it as a completed piece that they should critique and judge rather than as a starting point to engage them in your ongoing discussion.

K. I think quite often I don't sound coherent but that's when I usually come up with something. It's like when Debbie talks about going to the washing machine as part of her writing ritual. (laughter) I need to be able to amble on. It helps me to construct meaning when I am able to talk things out. But as teachers and as learners we don't seem to have space for that talking out to occur.
L. And there's no space for children ever to do that. . .
D. My best thinking is not done while I'm sitting at my computer. It often is done at my washing machine. When I get up, away from the area where I'm supposed to be producing my best work, and walk away from it for a minute, that's when and where I seem to find the space to make connections.

Research Journal: As we discussed our own writing behaviours and told stories of our responses to children's writing, I began to wonder how this spoke to the middle space we were creating in our group's conversations and stories. I wondered if middle space could be seen as a work in progress, a work with many "meat ends" that would never tie neatly into what others might eventually see as a finished product. I wondered if middle space could be seen as a work in progress that could have been constructed in so many different ways. I wondered what a middle space of circularity and new beginnings rather than a place of linear dimensions and finished products might look in our classrooms. I asked if our patriarchal institutions, our computers, and gendered commitment to rational and linear thinking with its logical frameworks and preconceived structures might close rather than open this middle space for many teachers and children. I asked how our research process might reflect these concerns and how a dissertation might speak in a tentative voice - a voice which was filled with continuing questions - rather than in a voice speaking with certainty, authority and answers.

Transcripts: (p. 103)
D. Since you are all looking at the transcripts from last week right now, I should bring up a problem I had. I told you, at the beginning of our research that I wanted to get the transcripts back to you in between each meeting. Unfortunately, I never knew how long it was going to take to do the transcription. (yes) So I'm wondering if it would it be possible for me to give them to you at the following meeting instead? This time was rather unique because with our last meeting being on a Thursday I did not have two weeks in between to do the transcripts and send them to you. This time I will have two full weeks so it probably would be possible to get them to you before the next meeting if you think this is important.

(No feedback from group. Group immersed in silent reading of the transcripts.)

M. This is so true, me stopping the class continuously, and then going oh gee, why did I stop them. And then saying to them, no, no, no. Oh nothing, go back to what you were doing. (laughter) They thought I was nuts.
(More quiet as reading continues.)
M. As we all sit here reading... (Laughter, overlapping talk)
(More quiet as reading continues.)

Transcripts: (pp. 109 - 110)
A. It's funny how your eyes beeline to your own words.
(laughter and overlapping talk) It's amazing how much of this stuff I forget.

Research Journal: These comments and the interest expressed by the group members in reading and responding to our previous conversations lead me to think that providing these transcripts for our group to read and reread is a helpful way to rethink and restory our experiences. I was not sure initially how much interest everyone would have in rereading our conversations, but from what I see happening at our meetings I now know that the transcripts have added an important layer to this research process.

Our transcribed conversations, the corresponding thoughts recorded in my research journal, and the group's reflective comments and connections have also lead me to create images of the multiple layers of understanding and new pathways of restorying that are becoming part of our collaborative attempt to construct our understanding of the middle space in our classrooms, in our curriculum and in our research. These layers and pathways are neither linear nor hierarchical but trace dynamic patterns in space and time presenting us with kaleidoscopic images and landscapes.

(Room quiet as reading resumes)
L. Is it fair to ask what's emerging for you right now Debbie, or is it still a mumble-jumble?
D. Yes it is fair but my thoughts are still very tentative. I don't want to limit the possibilities by identifying major threads or patterns too soon. However, different things have caught my attention as I've started to reread the transcripts. I bought a pad of sticky notes so if a thought comes to me in relation to the questions which framed this inquiry or to the middle space, I could make a note and stick it on that page. (Hmm) (That's a good idea.) So yes, there are some beginning thoughts emerging - one being the tentativeness I see in our language and in this research process. I think this tentativeness, this need to search for multiplicity rather than for certainty speaks to the middle space we are creating in this group and the one we want to create with the students in our classrooms. There are also some other thoughts that I would like to wait a little longer to share because if nothing else comes up on these topics maybe they aren't that important to our understanding. But, on the other hand, if you have introduced something I am particularly interested in and I don't hear about it again, I might bring it back to the group for you to reconsider at a later time if that's alright? (Mmmhmm)

### .... Shared reflections: Rethinking our conversations

Research Journal: As I am doing the transcription from this week's meeting, our conversation leads me to think that I need to include some of my thoughts along with the transcription - not as any final analysis but as a way to let you know what I'm thinking, as a way to start us rethinking our conversations and our stories, as a way to connect both this process and the stories to the middle space. Hopefully these reflections will lead to more indepth discussion of some of the issues we often touch on so briefly. I also hope that by combining my research journal with the transcripts you will feel welcome to respond to these reflective comments as well as to the transcripts.

*Marg's Reflection: Yes*

*Anne's Reflection: I find these starred comments by you very helpful, Debbie, as a departure point for me to make further comments.*

Transcripts: (p. 288)
M. (Reading transcripts....) All of a sudden you've started highlighting things?
M. What are the highlighted things?
D. Oh, just things I want to think about some more.
A. Underlined or highlighted.
D. Well ...
M. In bold print.
D. Just to help me when I go back over the transcripts (overlapping talk)
A. I've really found it helpful that how you have put stars**** in your comments and then underlined things because that's where I bee line to, to make my comments.
D. (Horror struck) Oh do you?
A. To those spots.
D. That's probably why I shouldn't have done it. I just thought that (Anne makes a laughing comment, no it's ...)
A. Because otherwise....
L. I can see why.
A. ....it's sort of overwhelming to look at the whole thing and wonder where to begin. You don't necessarily stick with the places that are marked but it gives you a starting point.

Research Journal: The issue of highlighting the transcripts and of including my journal reflections in the transcripts of the group meetings posed a continuing dilemma for me. While I wanted to begin the work of reconstructing our stories and our conversations during the time we were meeting, I did not want to limit the stories we would tell by emphasizing some things and ignoring others. I thought of times in my classroom when I had inadvertently directed the choices that students made or felt they could make by giving what I thought were multiple examples of possibility. However, as a member of this group and not an outside observer who did not want to contaminate the results, I also felt that I wanted to contribute the things that I was thinking and the things I was trying to work out. But until I realized that my dilemma was the result of once again being caught in the pervasive assumptions of a research methodology which was based on the idea that through properly conducted research or observation we could capture some existing truth or describe some objective reality rather than on a methodology which worked out of the belief that our reality is a socially constructed creation, I was unable to free myself from the limitations of the traditional research story.

Transcripts: (p. 122)
D. As I reread page twelve (week two) where Margaret was talking about not being clear about what the goals for this group were, I started to think about middle space as an openness with no set agenda. And I wondered, how do we perceive that space? What feelings of comfort or discomfort does it bring? We might think we want all the space in the world but having it may not be what we really want. As I was rereading this section, I got the feeling that you would all have been happier to have had a few more boundaries around (mmmhmm) your space. Yet I wondered if we would have found more direction to be limiting. I read a proposal today which outlined eight specific questions that were to be asked of the teachers being interviewed and I couldn't help thinking that I would not have known what questions to ask you about middle space. I thought about all the things that have emerged in and through our discussions just because we had no fixed agenda and no preplanned questions.
L. Are they open to those eight questions leading to other questions?
D. I don't know. If that was the intention, it wasn't stated. I had just finished typing our transcripts and I thought . . . Hmm (Laughter--overlapping talk --if you had kept to eight questions you'd be finished)
M. And for me, while I was being interviewed I'd be trying to think of a question that wasn't on the list. (mmmhmm, yes)
D. This made me think that the idea of comfort and discomfort in creating and living in the middle space might be something we could push in a little more depth. (mmmhmm)
K. I was thinking about my own reasons for being in this group and what we are talking about here - it's a very elusive beast isn't it?

Transcripts: (p. 110)
L. It's hard work isn't it? It's hard to - it just takes time to trust this process. (mmmhmm)
L. I mean it's not just analyzing a list of numbers that says forty-three people said yes, (mmmhmm) so you have to...

Research Journal: Lisa and Kelly raised important points as we sought to understand the middle space we were attempting to construct with each other and with our students. Their comments helped us to seek connections between the conversational story telling methodology and our evolving image and experience of middle space. Collaborative narrative research does not come in a prepackaged kit with easy to follow directions and, as Lisa pointed out, it is this lack of clear directives that both made us uneasy and opened up possibilities and spaces for new stories to be told. However, engaging in this type of research is hard and we became aware of conflicting stories as we found ourselves in the space between the sacred stories of research and curriculum which we wanted to interrupt (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a) and the new stories of research and curriculum which we wanted to tell. Because we could not count numbers or apply ready made formulas we had to continuously construct and reconstruct our understanding of what it meant to be a participant. We had to trust that knowledge would be constructed and reconstructed in the process of storying and restorying our lives. We had to trust ourselves and the people with whom we were in relationship. Furthermore, we had to trust that this trust would sustain our collaborative relationships and that it would support the risk that learning implies. We had to trust that together we would story the middle space of research and of practice. We had to embrace the elusive beast.

Reflective Turn: Brody, Witherell, Donald and Lundblad (1991), writing of their experiences in a a course on "Individual and Societal Perspectives on Adulthood" offered by the graduate school of professional studies at Lewis and Clark College, wondered what they could "do to 'break the set' of a typical college class and provide a context for people working creatively and honestly together?" (p. 261). They decided to incorporate a single session "challenge course" into the course because they believed that a common shared experience which they named a "metaphor for life," would help students develop the trust necessary to work openly with their peers as they explored difficult life issues.

As I write our research story, I wonder what common shared experiences drew us together and helped us develop trust in each other and in the process we were engaged in. I think of Stephen's Story as my first attempt to gather us round a shared experience, to ask if anyone else shared my feelings, to invite others to join in the collaborative work of creating a middle space. I think of the trust we built one story at a time.

Research Journal: I think our comfort with this process has to be something we are all committed to negotiating and renegotiating and I wonder if the process of negotiating our relationships with each other and with our knowing is not also part of what we could imagine the middle space to look and sound like in our classrooms and in our schools?

*Anne's Reflection: Yes, constantly in flux, as most real relationships are.*

Reflective Turn: Freire writes that dialogue "requires an intense faith in man[11], faith in his power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in his vocation to be more fully human" (Freire, 1990, p. 79). He sees this faith as an necessary requirement for the kind of conversation which has the possibility of leading the dialoguers into "ever closer partnership in the naming of the world" (p. 80). Freire further proposes that it is through dialogue that trust is established. He locates our desire to engage in dialogue in feelings of incompletion which motivate us to communicate with others in our own attempts to become more fully human and depicts hopelessness as the silence of withdrawal from others and from the world. Dialogue, he says, can not occur in a climate of hopelessness, and if the "dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounter will be empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious" (p. 80). Further to this, he states:

> "True dialogue can not exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking - thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men and admits of no dichotomy between them - thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity - thinking which does not separate itself from action.... For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men. In the words of Pierre Furter: 'The goal will no longer be to eliminate the risks of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space, but rather to temporalize space.... The universe is revealed to me not as space, imposing a massive presence to which I can but adapt, but as a scope, a domain which takes shape as I act upon it. (Furter, Pierre. Educacao e Vida. 1966, pp. 26 - 27).' (Freire, 1990, pp. 80 - 81).

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[11] The author of this paper wishes to acknowledge the importance of Freire's thinking in regard to the oppressed of whom he writes and to extend his thinking of those who are oppressed to include women. Since the flow of this passage would be significantly interrupted to make note of each reference to the generic man, suffice it to say that the omission of women is telling.

Transcripts: (pp. 119 - 123)
M. Kelly, did you make notes on this last week's transcript?
K. Yes.
M. I neglected to read it.
K. I just wrote down some thoughts.
M. I haven't had time to write either Debbie because I've been writing report cards, so I don't feel like writing after I've finished them.
D. I can see that.
K. I found it helpful to go back to page thirteen where we're talking about the purposes of this group getting together. I guess I'd forgotten about the four possible purposes.
D. Well, four possible purposes that I initially developed with the intention that you add in any possible purposes you have for yourselves or for this group.. (mmmhmm)
M. You mean other than supper?
D. Yes. (laughter)

# PART III.

# THE MIDDLE SPACE UNDER CONSTRUCTION: A WORK IN PROGRESS

## .... Classroom connections: The dilemmas of practice

Transcripts: (p. 123)
K. I am trying to make a connection between the openness of our research agenda with the way I set my classroom up. For example, at one time when my classroom was very open with a lot of centres, I had two students who were really not very comfortable with all of the choices. They had been trained into the worksheet mode and that's the way they tended to like to see things run - quite structured. So when I discovered that my open agenda was making these students uncomfortable, I was forced to look at my style of teaching and to think about these two children who did not seem to be fitting into my idea of what education should be. I had to ask how they could be comfortable in my room. (mmmhmm) However, since their reactions seemed almost opposite to what I would have expected, I wondered what was wrong. I knew there were theories out there that supported what I was doing so I wondered why this was not working for these two children.

Margaret's Reflection: *The middle space of one may not be the middle space of another.*

Research Journal: Do our preconceptions and personal biases also direct what the middle space might be - in this research and in our classrooms? To what structure does this middle space conform?

*Anne's Reflection: Definitely. I don't think any two classrooms would have the very same middle space although there'd be certain quantifiable - no, not quantifiable, just nameable similarities.*

Research Journal: Do we need to look at teacher's dilemmas in creating space for students when the space that is comfortable for the student is very different from the space that is comfortable for the teacher?

*Margaret's Reflection: Yes, it happens.*

Research Journal: Also, do we need to question why someone would be more comfortable completing a worksheet than working at a centre?

*Margaret's Reflection: There is security in similarity of the worksheets and a fear of the risk necessary to venture into the unknown centres.*

Research Journal: How does middle space differ for each individual? And if it is an individually determined matter, what similarities would still exist so we could recognize it as a story of middle space? Let's look again at middle space in connection to our expectations or, as related earlier, to our feelings of comfort or discomfort.

Transcripts: (pp. 125 - 126)
M. I can remember that when I went to school we never sat in anything other than rows. So of course when I started teaching I thought I was never going to use rows. But what did I find the favourite thing seven and eight year olds love to be in? "ROWS" (rows)
D. And in desks. When the grade ones came to our classrooms the year we switched from desks to tables (they were ....) they were heartbroken (yes). They thought they were coming to school and to them, school meant desks in rows. (laughter).
A. And the idea of the desk as your own individual space too - like having your own territory - that's what I found kids seemed to miss the most when we changed from desks to tables. Not that they didn't have their own space somewhere else like in their cubbies or wherever, but that seemed to be the

thing they were most worried about - having their own space for their stuff. (mmmhmm) Kids were often in very crowded, small homes with their families in the communities that I've been in and the idea of having their own space in school was very appealing. So to say, no we're not having desks was a real disappointment for some of them. I don't know whether that's good or bad.

Research Journal: Is it possible that the only need the students could express was having a space for their own stuff, because that stuff is concrete, whereas they might have felt a need to also have their own space for reasons that were harder for them to articulate. How do our classrooms allow room for both inner space and community space where our "private stuff" is welcome in the public realm? An alternate title or focus for my research (and to me very integral to our understanding of middle space) was the creation of sacred space in a public place. How can we create this sacred space?

*Anne's Reflection: I wonder if our focus on establishing democratic communities in our schools might result in a neglect of the students' need for private space in this public place. We need to remember that a balance between the individual and the community is necessary. One should not shut out the other.*

### .... The welcoming space

Research Journal: As I restory the story of sacred space as if appears in the transcripts and in my research journal, I wonder if our understanding of middle space in schools and in research could be enriched if we thought of the middle space as a welcoming space. Rather than running schools as places where we have to leave ourselves at the door and take on the image of someone else in order to be acceptable, in a welcoming space we could comfortably bring the private and the personal into meaningful connection with the public realm. In this welcoming space, this middle space, we would not have to leave behind those things of childhood, of home, of family - the things of our mothers - as we were socialized into the public and political world of our fathers. (Grumet, 1988)

Anne's Reflection: *When I think back to myself as a student, I remember trying to piece together what goal it was that the teacher had in mind with a particular set of lessons or in her behaviour toward the students. I was often baffled - unable to figure it out.*

Transcripts: (pp. 283 - 284)
D. In an attempt to make the implicit explicit, and to talk about conflicting and common goals, I would like to bring something to this group for your consideration. At AERA[12] there was discussion about collaborative groups like ours - where university researchers work with teachers in the field. These conversations included the concern that this type of research might be exploiting teachers. For example, if the university researcher was a doctoral or master's student, this person would be getting a dissertation or thesis out of the collaborative effort but others in the group would not get rewarded in the same way. The university researcher might also add to her publication record through jointly constructed material. While the teachers could be named and thus acknowledged in the academic realm, a publication record is not a source of recognition in the school system. I thought it might be more helpful to talk about ways the research could be mutually enriching. I wonder if we could include our thoughts and feelings about it in our research story. I do not think we all have or need to have the same purpose for being involved in the research process for it to be collaborative research and for it to be enriching rather than exploitive. However, it might be helpful if we could have a conversation about why we have chosen to participate in this research, and what purposes we feel this group is playing in our own professional development or what feelings of unfairness or exploitation we have perceived.
L. Well having just written a thesis, you can have it. (laughter)

Reflective Turn: In "Teachers and researchers in collaboration: Reflections on the process", Bickel and Hattrup (1995) report on a 54-month collaboration - the Thinking Mathematics Project - involving classroom teachers and faculty from the University of Pittsburgh. They particularly focused on the nature of collaborative experience for both the teachers and the researchers as they hope to identify those things which facilitate the building of a common learning community. They found that one of the most difficult tasks was attracting and maintaining "researchers' and teachers' interest and involvement in collaboration over time, even when the cause is one that is perceived to be highly salient to contemporary educational reform needs" (p. 44), and concluded that the reward and incentive systems in both systems are more important than shared purpose and commitment to the goals of the project. Noting that the expectations and rewards are very different in the two systems, they concluded that the rewards for researchers were noticeably absent because of both extensive time commitments and the minimal opportunity for scholarly publications. However, they saw the teachers as experiencing "many direct rewards as a result of their participation in the project" (p. 46). These rewards were obviously more intrinsically motivating than those which motivated the researchers, but since these authors had already identified the teachers as working within an egalitarian system rather than a system of merit (promotion and tenure), they did not seem to find it problematic that the teachers' involvement should be rewarded only in terms of increased knowledge or improved practice while they discounted (as an adequately motivating reason for participation) this same benefit when speaking of incentives for the university researchers' involvement.

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[12] AERA ( American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. Atlanta, Georgia. 1993.)

This interpretation leads me to conclude that research needs to be seen as professionally developmental by teachers in order to ensure their continuing involvement. It also leads me to conclude that researchers are not as motivated by the professionally developmental aspects of the research as they are by the system of university rewards. I am left wondering why teachers and researchers are content with the research story as it is currently being lived out since it seems to limit the benefits of the research for both the teachers and the researchers in almost opposite ways? And further extending Connelly and Clandinin's (1994a) hope that teaching will be conceptualized in terms of research and research will be conceptualized in terms of teaching, I wonder how we can think about the professional knowledge contexts which govern the relationships between schools and universities in ways that will allow both teaching and research to be reconceptualized and reconstructed in terms of professional development and professional reward.

### .... Reflexivity and reconstruction

Transcripts: (pp. 284, 285)
D. Also, at some point in time we might like to take time to reread and restory some of the conversations we had in earlier weeks. (yes) It seems that we

keep going on to new things which is fine but when Margaret talked about the research that she did with the two student teachers and said that she was sorry they did not have more time for reflection because of the momentum of their courses, I thought we might like to have a meeting where we specifically revisited our past stories.
M. Yes. I've been rereading the transcripts and some of the comments that we made. I now think I have a little better picture in my mind (right) of the stuff we talked about at the very beginning (yes).
D. So maybe next week we could start off with your thoughts on exploitation versus mutual enrichment (laughter, it sounds like something sexual) and then spend some time retracing our conversations.

Research Journal: This seems to be an example of the social construction of meaning. Everyone in our group is contributing to our effort to "work it out" or "make it up." I had a discussion with Jean yesterday in which we tried to understand what it meant to construct knowledge - which we are not happy to label as truth. I questioned if knowledge is not something that exists "out there" independently of the people who experience it, is it then something we just make up? Jean said that Lillian Katz says: I just made it up. So I thought good, we are not (re)searching for the middle space as it already exists, but through our stories and our conversations we are socially constructing what the middle space is for us. It is amazing, however, that even though I know this, how often and how quickly I can get drawn back into old ways of thinking (sacred stories) which would have me believe we are trying to find the middle space as if it had an independent existence outside of the context of our lived and storied experience.

Transcripts: (pp. 313 - 314)
A. Do you want to just have the comments?
D. If that's what you'd like to do - write right on the transcripts and give them back to me?
A. Yes.
D. Do you want to do that?
A. I can see it not being that exciting for everybody to listen to me read them [her comments and responses]
D. Unless you want more discussion then ....
A. Well yes, some things sort of point to that. Maybe what I'll do is......How can I do that? Some places I did ask more questions rather than just comment ..... Well, I'll just give them to you.
D. If you are writing on the transcripts and you indicate where your reflective

comments fit, (yes, I did that) then I could enter them into the text too. So at those places we would have a second layer of transcripts allowing us to reconstruct and restory. That would be wonderful. Do you have time to do that?
M. What was that?
L. I wasn't listening, I'm reading now.
D. Anne was saying that she has written comments/responses right onto the existing transcripts, and I said if she then gave them back to me - a story or a remark or a further elaboration - I could go back in the computer file and add any new thinking you would like to include. If I use a different typeset, it will be helpful for looking at our changing reflections and show how we reconstruct meaning from our stories.

## .... The physicality of middle space: Hysterical laughter

Transcripts: (pp. 317 - 327)
M. It's interesting that sometimes I think of the concept of middle space as being a theoretical concept but it's also a very physical concept. Because here, (What page?) on page thirty-nine, I'm talking about that idiot Adam that I had as a student teacher. You know he kind of invaded my personal space. (yes) (men do that) (pause as reading resumes)
A. I love it when you write hysterical laughter in the transcripts. (This has got to go into your thesis because it's so important to our relationships and to our stories.) .....some more laughter.....

Research Journal: I've never seen anything written about the sense of humour or the laughter that makes both our meetings and this collaborative research so enjoyable. It seems to be unmentioned - almost as if research had to be a very solemn and serious business to be valid. Yet, as I type our transcripts in isolation - a task which I sometimes find quite lonely - the sound of your voices but especially the laughter that I hear as I listen to our conversations helps to keep me feeling connected and committed to this process. Teaching is often referred to as an isolated profession. I think many researchers must also feel this sense of isolation. What I often miss in my own classroom is the laughter shared with another adult who can appreciate the really funny things that my students say and do. Although our choices are informed by multiple experiences, as I reflect on my past it is not surprising that I was drawn to storytelling as a research methodology nor is it surprising that I chose to work with others in a collaborative research group. And as I type our transcripts, part of what I want to give back to you is the memory of our shared laughter. That is why, whenever I hear it, I write "laughter" into the transcripts. Now it seems that we have created metalaughter - laughter about our laughter - which I think must be quite unique to collaborative storytelling!

M. It's really nice to read though. You know it's also nice that we're going to have these (transcripts) because we'll always have this conversation even when we're way out in who knows where.....
D. So if you decide to write your reflections on them make sure you put your names on them so I can give them back to you.
M. Laughing.....that was so funny Lisa.... your story about school climate....you all getting a tee shirt! (laughter) (and they were happy)
D. Lisa, I've been wanting to ask you, everytime I type Curtis into these transcripts I wonder what you would have thought if he had come to our group?
L. Oh, but there are two men I've talked about who are both named Curtis, you know that right?
D. No, I didn't know that.
L. The Curtis I was going to bring to this group is not the same Curtis I've mentioned in several of my stories....
D. Oh I see because I've often wondered what he would have done to our group.
L. This would have been a very different conversation because I would have been talking with a colleague, (right) a fellow teacher. Not that we are into any kind of power thing like I am with the principal, but I still think it would have been very different and gender issues might have come into it for me and for the group too. That's what might have been interesting about it. We might have experienced the gender issues in the context of this group and in our understanding of middle space as well as in the stories that we have shared.

### .... Editing our stories

Research Journal: It's interesting to think that this conversation would have been completely different with Curtis in it and that consequently the "middle space" as we have come to make it up together would have also been very different. In this respect it's also interesting to think that we could have made it up very differently ourselves - a multiplicity of middle spaces. Is it possible that this multiplicity or possibility of many different conversations is, in itself, part of what we want to call middle space?

M. I would have been way more intimidated.
A. I would have too.
L. I don't think you would have been with Curtis by this point in time - before this maybe. He's a very loving, thoughtful, kind, compassionate man and not
A. Your principal?
L. Oh, no.
A. Doesn't your principal have the same name?
L. Yes.
D. As I reread our transcripts - not having guessed that you were referring to two different men - I thought Curtis really does need to come to this group (he has a lot to learn about school climate and about middle space) but I also wondered if we would have really wanted him here?

Research Journal: This thought leads me to wonder about who we want in our middle space. Or even if it would be possible for the middle space to exist for us in our group or in our classrooms if certain people were in it?

*Lisa's Reflection: Do we have the choice, or the right to choose?*

Research Journal: Put another way, could the presence of certain people keep the possibility of a middle space from materialising for other people? What kind of person is necessary for a middle space to occur for us as teachers or maybe more specifically as female teachers? How does this translate into creating a middle space with all the students in our classrooms?

L. I think there would have been a difference with Curtis though, because I know if I were to take any of these transcripts and edit the unethical things out our conversations would look and feel quite different. (What is unethical?) What I'm saying about my school. (oh, yes) (oh, we all did that) I know but this has become a safe space where we can talk about things we don't feel safe enough or ready to talk about in our schools.

Research Journal: If we want to look at the possibility of collaborative storytelling groups as places for ongoing professional development we need to think about the professional ethics of the discussions and how not only the "editing of the transcripts" but the "editing of our conversation / stories" would have affected the middle space this group has become for us. Would the group have been as valuable for us if we had not initially agreed to "suspend the code of professional conduct"[13] and, even with this agreement in place, would we have felt the same freedom to voice our thoughts and concerns if other members of our teaching staffs or our principals had been present? Thinking of this type of group as a space for teachers' professional development, how would the proximity of certain others affect the collaboration and the usefulness of this experience for us as individual teachers? Would there have been so many topics we could never have raised that we would have been confined to discussing issues of less importance to us and to our understanding of the dilemmas we face in trying to create middle space in our classrooms?

*Lisa's Reflection:* *How will you write these stories Debbie? And yet, they are the stories we are telling, so how can you just ignore them in the final research report?*

L. But returning to the subject of Curtis's participation in this group, when he read your proposal he was really intimidated by it. He was really afraid of it because he found it quite academic. I guess that's why I'm kind of scared to take my own stuff in to share with the teachers I work with. It's such a different language we talk in the schools and in the universities. I know when I first started university three years ago it took me awhile to feel comfortable. There seems to be a language of research (yes) and I found it really hard to feel comfortable not only reading it but writing it as well. I mean you just feel like you'll never be able to write the way that these people are writing and then eventually you sort of find your own way to do it. But just taking this writing to somebody - cold in the school - who has not been in touch professionally with any academic kinds of periodicals or research or that kind of thing is difficult. He is, - maybe I'm not giving him a lot of credit - but he's not really an abstract kind of thinker (mmmhmm).
M. Well I'm not really an abstract kind of thinker either.
L. But when we talk about middle space, you can talk about the diversity of this space and you can see how it exists on multiple levels and dimensions, or you can talk about who you are in this space. I'd be curious to know if he would

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[13] We are referring to the Code of Professional Conduct as published and enforced by the Alberta Teachers' Association. This code stipulates the minimum standards of acceptable professional conduct for teachers. This code includes the following statement: (13) The teacher criticizes the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher only in confidence to proper officials and after the other teacher has been informed of the criticism. In the context of this research, the participants have not first gone to those whose practice they may be criticizing. However, none of the teachers mentioned in our conversations and stories in the "sanctuary" of the research group were identified by their last names and the first names of all teachers thus storied have been changed in the research text.

think in those terms. I think that after awhile he'd start to feel comfortable too but I know that at first glance he did not think he could be part of this conversation and I know if I had read a proposal five years ago I probably wouldn't have come to university or to this group either. I would have said no, it's not mine.

D. Don't you think that some proposals and even research articles were written a lot differently five years ago? Don't you think that as the university has become cognizant of the silence of teachers in the research stories there has been a movement to writing in more accessible language?

L. No. But we talked a little bit about it and I said to him it takes awhile to feel comfortable and it's not what you might think it is - it's not that tough. You just have to start to think a little bit differently. Whereas, I guess we were all in touch in some way with the research world so we were more comfortable with joining this research group and looked forward to the chance to talk about things in a different way than we would in our school settings.

A. Well I was really worried about coming to this group -

M. So was I.

A. That I'd be right out of the language and stuff, that I wouldn't be at all with it - but I guess that I was willing to take the chance.

M. Well, I was worried at the first meeting. (you were?) Oh, yes. (you were what?) I was intimidated at the very first meeting that we had because you all kind of knew each other and at least had threads of connection here and there and I didn't know what you were talking about.

## .... Revisiting our beginnings

Research Journal: I'm wondering if there would have been a better way to begin this group than giving you all my proposal to read and inviting you to the first meeting "cold turkey"? Remember when I first talked to you on the phone and I said that I didn't want to talk a lot with you individually about what we were going to do in this group because I didn't want anyone to arrive the first night feeling that they were already "behind" or "left out"? Do you think I should have arranged private meetings with each of you prior to our first group meeting? What would have made you more comfortable? Or is it possible that any new venture like this causes us a certain amount of apprehension that we just have to live through?

I think that I was just as nervous about our first meeting as you were - maybe even more so - and for me part of the discomfort was having this very open agenda. It's a lot easier to run a typical business meeting or to conduct a structured interview with at least some predetermined questions than it is to enter this "vaporous" middle space in order to talk about "it". It seems like what we did took a lot of risking on each of our parts and once again I wonder if the middle space is a space where this risk taking can occur?

*Lisa's Reflection: Middle space is always "under construction" You have to live with a lot of ambiguity. (Or at least I do.) I was apprehensive about coming, primarily because I was tired... Your phone calls really helped me to make a commitment for myself.*

A. I didn't know you Lisa and I didn't know you either Margaret.
D. No, Anne didn't know me either. I knew her husband.
A. Yes, I knew through Jeff who you were but I knew Kelly.
L. It would be interesting though to have somebody like Curtis here to take this a step farther into - I don't really mean that, having him here wouldn't be a step farther, this is what we're doing. This is my professional development, it's sort of my sanity check but then again, I think that Curtis could have probably added a lot to our group.
D. Well then it's too bad that he didn't come. But actually before I knew there were two men with the same name I was glad he decided not to come.
A. Yes, especially if he was the one who had made that comment to you about the elastic band.
L. No that was a different person, a completely different one. (laughter)
D. Has anybody had the chance to think about whether the kind of collaborative research we are engaged in is mutually enriching or whether it exploits the teachers who participant?
L. I'm exploiting you for supper!
(laughter)
L. Mutual exploitation. Is that what we're doing?
M. Now I remember the conversation. There are things in here I'd like to respond to. I'll have to squeeze in the time for writing somehow this week.
A. And as far as the exploitation, I feel like I'm getting a lot more out of it than the other way around. Having a chance to talk to people -especially because I'm not teaching myself this year- to talk about school is so nice. And to me it's a lot more positive than exploitive.
D. Did Jeff say anything to you about the session that we were at on Saturday at the Research Experience (not a lot) or mention the person from the school system who arranges the placement of the researchers in the schools? He talked as if research is often perceived by the school system as the university exploiting the teachers and the kids in the school.
L. I think for some people it has been like that but I think what makes this kind of - your - research different is that there are some personal threads of connection. You didn't just look in the phone book and phone six people and

say do you want to come for research. Neither did the research placement officer just give you six names of people to contact. I think a personal connection is very important in this kind of research.

D. As I imagined the people who would want to be involved in participating and constructing this research space, I knew that the only possibility it had for working would be if teachers made a connection and a commitment to the topic and to establishing and pursuing common purposes. I hoped that after reading *Stephen's Story* and identifying with the concerns and the dilemmas his experience had raised for me, that some people would choose to become involved in continuing this conversation.

I made the connection with Margaret through a mutual friend who had read my proposal and said she knew somebody who would love to be involved in a conversation like this and who also enjoyed writing. She offered to take my proposal for Margaret to read .....

M. I feel guilty that I haven't done more writing. More work for you .....

A. Yes, me too.

D. But I don't want you to do work for me.

M. Well I know. Work is probably the wrong choice but I do feel like I agreed to do some writing, and I'm telling stories but not writing them.

D. Which seems to be working just fine since I am making a written record of them in the transcripts.

M. Okay. Are you sure?

D. Yes. I'm sure. I think I will have lots of "stuff" to work through.

A. When I read the transcripts through this last week, I thought that too. There is a lot in here.

M. But this particular one, week six, piqued my interest more than the others had. There's lot's of stuff in here.

D. I actually thought there were some interesting issues that came up in that one too. It seemed like we pushed some lines a little bit further and (overlapping talk)

L. Part of that is the gender thing.

D. I agree there seemed to be several places we focused on gender issues.

### .... Going around and around

M. And part of the depth of our conversation last week comes from just being more familiar with one another. For example, if Lisa has a point that I'm not going to agree on I'll keep talking about it rather than just agreeing to disagree because now we know that whether we like each other or not isn't an issue. We have developed a relationship based on respect and caring. There is a space which allows for separation and connection. That level of comfort and the middle space to be yourself even when you do not agree with someone else does not happen right away, you have to have time for that to happen.

*Lisa's Reflection: We can now go around and around in the space we have created in this group.*

A. But I feel that this week I haven't contributed my fair share.
M. You did deliver a baby. That's sort of important in terms of....
L. That's big....(laughter)
M. In terms of world development that's fairly good (overlapping talk and laughter)
M. Personally I can not see how you're doing it. I mean, I'm impressed that you're coherent with a child, a new born child.
A. Well I said to Jeff I shut down at 8:30. It's a good thing that we don't go past that time here because I lose it then.
D. Do you go to bed early then?
A. No I don't go to bed but I fold laundry (laughter).
D. It's interesting, we were talking about the feelings that both teachers and researchers experienced in relation to their contributions to the research effort in our research group at the Centre Thursday. One of the researchers shared that participants in her study were worried that they weren't talking about what she wanted them to talk about (mmmhmm). She had a difficult time convincing them that what she wanted them to do was to talk about what they wanted.
A. Well that's how I felt even today at this meeting. We have hardly mentioned the term middle space and have not talked as much about it as we usually do so it's hard to shake the feeling that we are not living up to our research commitment.
D. It might feel like we have been off topic today in our discussion or that we have not really become involved like we do sometimes, but until I do the transcription it's difficult to pick out what we focused on. When we're in the middle of the experience it's hard to be reflective but as long as our conversation includes stories of our lives in school and comments about our group interactions I think we will find connections to the middle space.

Research Journal: After just recently commenting on the richness of our conversations and their relevance to our understanding of middle space, it is interesting that I have detected a difference in our conversation this week. As I'm listening to our taped conversation it seems that we are as comfortable as usual with our visiting talk, but quite hesitant and not ready to engage in our "research talk" with Margaret and Kelly missing from the group. At the start of our research I had wondered if having people missing at various times would make a difference to our conversations. Of course I knew that the actual conversation would be different, but I wondered if we would get to the place as a group where our conversation would reflect the feeling or the sense of somebody missing. Tonight I felt, and I think our conversation reflected, that we did not want to share our important stories until everyone in the group could hear them. As I reread some previous transcripts where we were restorying some stories that someone missed entirely, (like the tee shirt story Anne missed) or where someone missed part of one of the ongoing serials we continue each week, I was interested to see how we all assumed responsibility for quickly filling in the spaces so our common connections could be re-established.

A. Is your tape recorder on yet Debbie?
D. Yes it is.
A. Oh, take that part off
D. I'm not going to transcribe this part of our conversation anyway.
A. Good.

## .... Crossing borders

Research Journal: When our group met for the first two times, I had not put the tape recorder on until after we had had supper. However, even at these meetings, if I thought our conversation had moved from what I was calling visiting talk into research talk during this time I would quickly turn on the tape recorder and then turn it off again as we lapsed into visiting once more. It was difficult to keep deciding the whole time if our research conversation had begun or if what we were saying was off topic. Therefore, I decided to put the tape on as soon as the first person arrived. Since doing this, I found that the "just visiting" talk often flowed so smoothly into our research talk that I could not locate the boundary between them. I also found that since the research of our classroom stories of middle space has expanded in focus to include thinking about how we construct the middle space in our group and in our schools, the boundary has become almost non-existent. Often I did not transcribe everything we said, especially if someone asked me to turn off the tape recorder, but since our second meeting everything has been taped so we could listen to our entire conversation at a future time if we wanted to.

The conversation about this, and my subsequent reflections, led me to think about the safe space we have begun to construct as well as about the divisions we made between our private and public conversations. Although we want the freedom to bring our private stories to a public place, we also want to be able to decide which stories we will share publicly. In one sense our group is a public place and its connection to the world of research makes it in some ways more public than our school contexts. However, in another sense, it has also become a private place and in some ways its disconnection from the world of school makes it more private. As we seek to construct middle spaces for our students and for ourselves as teachers, I wonder how we understand the spaces from which we speak?

Reflective Turn: As I read Giroux's (1992) book, *Border Crossings Cultural Workers and The Politics of Education*, I think of the borders we have experienced and crossed as both classroom teachers and in the context of this research group. I think of the times we too have questioned and tried to interrupt those sacred stories and the master narratives that we were no longer prepared to accept as normal, as inevitable, as ethical.

Giroux explores "the politics of location" and suggests that those people he calls cultural workers (artists, writers, media producers, and professionals in the fields of law, social work, architecture, medicine, theology, education, and literature) need to identify and interrogate the spaces from which they speak and the language that they speak in. He attempts to understand how language is produced and rewritten and to position it not only in relation to the production of meaning and social identity but in relation to human agency and possibility.

Giroux names the discourses which structure social relations of power, privilege and oppression the master narratives. These master narratives, much like Crites (1971) sacred stories, have been accorded the status of universality and as such are often unexamined. He sees the languages of postcolonialism, feminism, modernism and postmodernism as oppositional and emancipatory discourses because they allow us to cross these often invisible borders in order to challenge, remap and renegotiate "those boundaries of knowledge that claim the status of master narratives, fixed identities, and an objective representation of reality" (p. 26) in their efforts to create a language which is based on multiplicity rather than binary oppositions and a public sphere which can encompass social equality, cultural diversity and participatory democracy.

He says, within feminist and postmodern discourses, a politics of location has led to the recognition of:

> ...the situated nature of knowledge, the partiality of all knowledge claims, the indeterminacy of history and the shifting, multiple and often contradictory nature of identity. At question here is the issue of who speaks, under what conditions, for whom, and how knowledge is constructed and translated within and between different communities located within asymmetrical relations of power. In addition, there is the important issue of how identity itself is constituted and what the enabling conditions might be for human agency. What the various discourses on the politics of location have made clear is that the relationship between knowledge and power on the one hand and the self and others on the other is as much an issue of ethics and politics as it is one of epistemology (p. 26).

In the context of our research inquiry and in the writing of the research text, we too have attempted to identify and interrogate the master narratives and the spaces from which we speak. Our stories named our locations and politicized the research space and the middle space. Our conversations allowed us to question "where our particular experiences and practice fit within the articulations and representations that surround us" as well as to "open up new spaces for conversations and forms of solidarity" (p.26). As exclusions, repressions and divisions are no longer ignored and those structures which "both privilege and exclude particular readings, voices, aesthetics, authority, representations, and forms of sociality" (p. 27) are identified, we are not only able to name our oppressor(s) but to see how own actions may have been complicitous in this oppression.

Transcripts: (p. 290)

D. In our meeting on week five I thought we were visiting more than focusing on our topic, and yet (I wouldn't have said that then) we really talked about a lot of important issues. I wrote something in your transcripts about this. I had told you something about my grandson, Nicolas, I think.
A. About reading him a story?

D. Yes

A. And then in your journal comments you talked about the private and the home stuff and about feelings that you had about bringing this story up in the group. I was really glad that you said that.

D. I was trying to sort out some ambivalent feelings that the transcripts had brought back to my attention. I had told you a story about reading to my grandson, Nicolas.

A. Yes. When you made those comments on that page, it reminded me of how our self-concept is so tied in with those attitudes and feelings that the stuff of the home is not of value and worth in a public place.

D. But we have been taught by someone to think that our personal or private stories have no place in the public or political realm have we not? So, I'm saying it is no accident that we have those feelings.

A. Yes, and that is why it is so hard to be a person who stays at home and does not go out to work. (absolutely)

L. But I feel that home is a private space for some people and there are some things they would not want to share or would not want me - the teacher - to know.

D. I agree with you Lisa but that is not quite what I meant. It seems that you are referring to an individual's choice not to speak rather than to the feeling that your stories of home are out of place in the school or the university. You said just a little while ago that you are who you are (yes) and I think that there was something important in that reflection. You are who you are...

L. And why can't I just be who I am?

D. Yes, exactly. I come with mother stories and grandmother stories. They help me make sense of the world. So why should I get a message from people that telling these stories is inappropriate, that my stories are not really academic or do not relate to the type of knowledge which the university values?

A. That you have to use that research language or something to be worthwhile?

D. When I was doing my B.Ed. I was probably one of only a few students who had children of my own. I remember quite clearly my feelings of surprise when a professor would teach something and then ask us to make up a possible example - an example which I soon learned was to use hypothetical students rather than real children. Being quite perceptive, I quickly internalized the unspoken message that an example from my own children's experience or from my experience with them was neither accepted nor valued. (you weren't allowed to) It was not that obvious but it was unmistakable, through whatever innuendoes or body language that was operating in the situation, I and everyone else realized that phony examples (laughter) were valued more than real life experiences. It was as if you were not playing the theoretical game by the rules if you interrupted the professor's abstract conjectures with real live children.

A. It's really hard for me not to bring my own children into my learning and teaching now.

D. I know, it's hard not to. But the question is why should it even be necessary. I don't think we should just accept that it is right to continue with this type of a split between the home and the school or the classroom and the university. Fortunately there are some classes where you are comfortable sharing your school stories but there are still many where you would feel uncomfortable about bringing in classroom stories (not even classroom?) (No) ....never mind dipping back into your home. (laughter, overlapping talk, totally unmentionable eh?)
L. Double dipping.
M. Well then you would never be able to mention childhood at all - especially not your own.
L. No that's the third one. No professor would appreciate that one (hysterical laughter) (Triple dipping, the three unmentionables, your children, the children in your classroom and worst of all, yourself as a child.)

*Lisa's Reflection:* *I love this and laugh as I read it.*

But as I reread these transcripts, I wonder how can we create a middle space for the children in our classrooms unless we are connected and reconnected to the feelings and stories of children and childhood? If I move from these concrete and lived experiences to the abstract and the hypothetical, surely my distanced countenance will alter perception as well as perspective. Intricacies and interactions will blur as rough edges appear smooth and nuances fade and disappear through my disconnection.

### .... Pressed up tight against the story

Transcripts: (pp. 328 - 330)
M. Kids sure pick up on your feelings. I was grouchy today. By the afternoon I was grouchier and my kids were getting grouchier by the second. I know it was because I was grouchy. (mmmhmm) And they were feeling scared, not scared of me but scared because I'm usually really good natured and I can usually take things in my stride. But they were fragile because of it, and I was getting mad because they were like that. I wanted to say, oh come on just because I'm grouchy doesn't mean you have to fall apart. It's awful. I feel badly. I feel guilty about being grouchy today too. (Do you?) I think that's why I keep saying it over and over tonight because, yes I do. It wasn't really their fault and they're little. For a lot of them I am like their mother and they were the ones who were the worst today because they were thinking that I'm not supposed to be like this.

L. Would you tell them that, though? Would you just say look I'm feeling grumpy.
M. I would have but by the time I had sorted out my feelings it was too late, the damage was done. When I think about it, I did not really feel that I was grouchy today until the last hour of the day and that was when I thought I am going to go crazy if somebody does not help me here.
L. And it's too hard to talk about it when you are in it.

Research Journal: Margaret's story provides us with a glimpse into an experience we have all shared, that experience of being "pressed up against the story" too tightly to sort our thoughts and feelings out, a window into the feeling that we have all had - that we need to keep talking about something in order to understand its significance in our lives. This experience of being too closely and too deeply pressed into a story to understand what it means and the resultant need to gain the distance in both time and space to make sense of our experience is difficult for us to think about in the framework of a storytelling group.

In narrative research we are living out the belief that we need to get closer to our stories not further from them in order to see more clearly, in order to understand more fully. Our desire to engage in narrative research has often resulted from our discomfort with traditional definitions and manifestations of objectivity and from our efforts to bridge an objective-subjective split that we see as problematic in constructing our understanding of the lived world of students and teachers. However, in order to think about being pressed too closely into a story we need to think about objectivity in a new way, a way which does not seek to suppress the subjective experience in order to produce a truer picture (untainted by human emotions) of reality, but in a way which allows us to more fully understand the subjective experience as it is storied and restoried, constructed and reconstructed within an objective reality which can not exist apart from our subjective and reflective construction of it.

Reflective Turn: In thinking about this dilemma, Freire states:

> ....One can not conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized. The separation of objectivity from subjectivity, the denial of the latter when analyzing reality or acting upon it, is objectivism. On the

> other hand, the denial of objectivity in analysis or action, resulting in a subjectivism which leads to solipsistic positions, denies action itself by denying objective reality. Neither objectivism nor subjectivism....is propounded here, but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship. To deny the importance of subjectivity....is to admit the impossible: a world without men" and this position "is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates men without a world. World and men do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction (Freire, 1990, pp. 35 - 36).

### .... Between borders: I'm going to Australia

D. Margaret, as I think about your story, I think you need an Australia corner. Have you read *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst, 1972)? Well, in this book a little boy who had not had a very good day thought he needed to escape from his current reality by going to Australia. Years after I had read this book and used it as a model for students to write about their own bad days, I heard a story about a teacher who had built an Australia corner in her room so whenever anybody was really out of sorts and didn't feel like explaining himself or herself they could just take their work and move to the Australia corner. You could have gone there today.
M. And I've got a loft. I could make it up in my loft because I've got a whole bunch of kids that could use an Australia corner this year. If all else fails you could go to Australia (laughter). I'm going to Australia ....

Research Journal: I wonder where Australia fits into the middle space we want to construct with our students. Does it speak to the need to respect each other's feelings and to an acknowledgement that in any classroom or collaborative research group we may each need a place to retreat when our interactions with others in this community space are not working out, or when we just need a place to think?

> My bath was too hot, I got soap in my eyes, my marble went down the drain, and I had to wear my railroad-train pajamas. I hate my railroad-train pajamas.
> When I went to bed Nick took back the pillow he said I could keep and the Mickey Mouse night light burned out and I bit my tongue.
> The cat wants to sleep with Anthony, not with me.
> It has been a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.
> My mom says some days are like that.
> Even in Australia (Viorst, 1972).

Does it speak to our need to gain some objectivity in order to understand our subjectivity?

Reflective Turn: As I read "Some Implications of Paulo Freire's Border Pedagogy" (Janmohamed, 1994) I was reminded of our discussion of Australia especially as it refers to a need to gain objectivity in order to understand our subjectivity. The essay, investigates Freire's pedagogic strategy and claim that introducing the peasants to literacy reactivates their subjectivity and enables them to "create themselves as new subjects" (p. 242) as they break down the "codified, sedimented reality of their mundane lives" and realize that both "linguistic and social structuration are based on differential relations of elements that can be separated and recombined, and therefore controlled, by the subject performing the operation" (p. 242). In this political practice, Freire encourages the peasants to focus on their alienation from the dominant culture so they will be able to draw boundaries between themselves and the dominant society and thereby reconstruct their own identities, "that is, culture, as an interiorized product . . . must become the object of men's knowledge so that they can perceive its conditioning power" (p. 245) and become agents in their own emancipation.

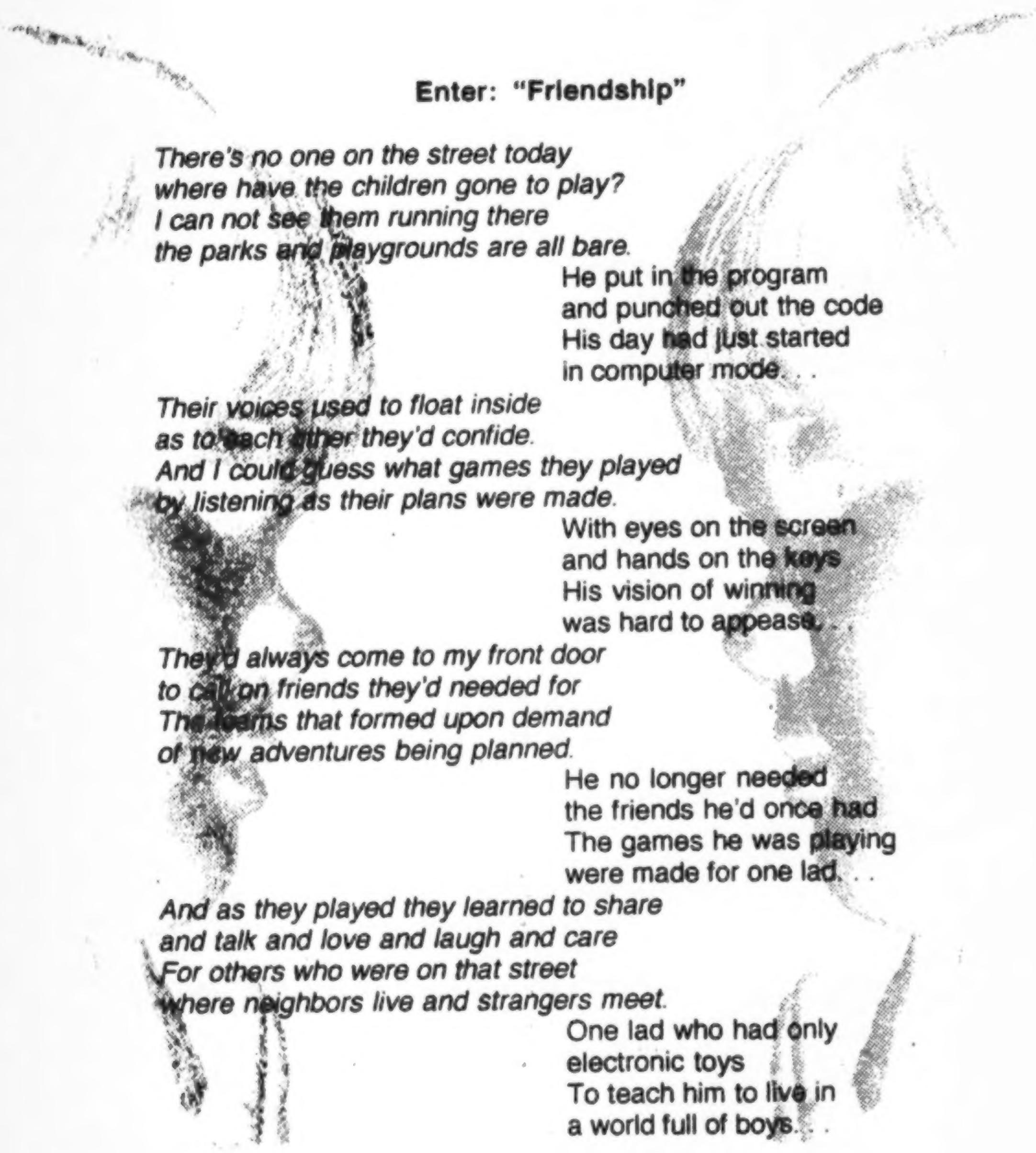
"For Freire to encourage them to study the conditions of their existence is implicitly to persuade them to study the power relations that define their current and future identities" (p. 245). The reflection that is required in order to do this leads to the creation of a distance that is empowering in that it "provides a space in which a new subjectivity can begin to articulate itself" (p. 245) apart from the dominant social structure. As they examine the borders which confine them "they in effect become archeologists of the site of their own social formation" (p. 248) and open up possibilities of changing their present condition and achieving a new reality.

M. ....and the thing is, they are a really hard working bunch. They are the only kids I have ever had who like to write in the last hour of the day. For most other grade one or two classes, writing is the last thing you do at they end of the day. (You write in the morning.) But these kids like to write and they are really quite responsive. And what they were saying to me - and I do know better, after this many years of teaching I should know that when the back of my mind says we should be going outside or we should be running around or we should be doing centre time I should go with it. Unfortunately today I did not listen to my intuition but to the other part of my mind which said, oh if I can just finish this bit we will be that much further ahead tomorrow. It never works. I should know better.

> Research Proposal: (pp. 15, 16) *And it is this broadening and heightening of struggles that I seek. As my interest is not in answering these many questions specifically, but in exploring the classroom teachers' experience of curriculum as space, in listening to the classroom teachers' stories of the children they teach; the stories that exist because of the teachers' personal and responsible connection with the world (Welty, 1979, p. 46); the stories that speak with the voice of an individual '...bound up in the local, the real, the present, the ordinary day-to-day of human experience (Welty, 1979, p. 117); the story 'that comes out of human life and leads back into human life' (Welty, 1979, p. 58). For in keeping with the writing of Eudora Welty, "who could assess the moral and ethical dimension of place" and who "could create a context in which the universal was subtly evoked in the clarity of the particular" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 7); or Eisner (1991) who explored the use of the "concrete universal" in our ability to make generalizations; I too expect, that in the telling of each teacher's personal stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1994b) is the knowledge that will link curriculum theory to social and moral concerns, to classroom practice and student experience. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the understanding that will open the windows, and the key that will unlock the doors. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the community who will gather 'round to listen, inquire and reflect, and the collective strength that will open the spaces. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories in a response-filled community is the space to hope (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), and the space to recreate our selves and our schools.*

# CHAPTER FOUR

# LIVING IN THE MIDDLE SPACE: RESPECT, RELATIONSHIP, RESPONSE



## Enter: "Friendship"

*There's no one on the street today*
*where have the children gone to play?*
*I can not see them running there*
*the parks and playgrounds are all bare.*

He put in the program
and punched out the code
His day had just started
in computer mode. . .

*Their voices used to float inside*
*as to each other they'd confide.*
*And I could guess what games they played*
*by listening as their plans were made.*

With eyes on the screen
and hands on the keys
His vision of winning
was hard to appease. . .

*They'd always come to my front door*
*to call on friends they'd needed for*
*The teams that formed upon demand*
*of new adventures being planned.*

He no longer needed
the friends he'd once had
The games he was playing
were made for one lad. . .

*And as they played they learned to share*
*and talk and love and laugh and care*
*For others who were on that street*
*where neighbors live and strangers meet.*

One lad who had only
electronic toys
To teach him to live in
a world full of boys. . .

(Schroeder, 1990)

# PART I.

# UNLOCKING OUR STORIES: THE HEART OF THE MIDDLE SPACE

Research Journal: It is interesting to note that according to the numbers on the tape recorder which methodically measured out the length of the conversation in our last meeting, we spent a much longer time engaged in general conversation than we usually do. I wonder if this was because the interval between this meeting and the one before it was longer than usual. Or perhaps, the rhythm of our conversation was altered because we did not know that Margaret was unable to come and we were reluctant to begin without her. But whatever the cause, I'm finding even though the time spent in informal chatting varies from meeting to meeting, we do not ever seem to get "right to work".

As a researcher making these observations and engaging in these reflections, I can't help but think that I should have tried harder to keep our conversations more focused. But even as I question my role in the group, I find that using my turn or a pause in the general conversation to refocus our discussion caused only a momentary "shift to business" in the spaces where our personal conversations were held. So, I am not sure I could have kept us "on track" even if I had known where that track was leading. I also think a certain amount of history, which could only be written through spending time together, was necessary for me to become aware of the different feelings and rhythms which I feel characterize our meetings. And although some of my observations are supported by the transcripts, in other instances they are more felt than concrete, and exist in the spaces between the words, the laughter, the tentativeness and the body language as much as they do in the things we did or did not say.

And then again, that I would even make this observation causes me to wonder if our understanding of the work of research has been too narrowly defined. Being creatures of our past paradigms, have we excluded or marginalized the work necessary to establish research relationships as surely as we have marginalized so much of the work women do? Is it possible, that old ways of thinking have kept us from recognizing the importance of building and maintaining relationships, tasks which are beginning to seem as essential to the work we are doing as collaborative researchers as it is to the work we do as teachers?

Reflective Turn: As we reflect on the the language we use to describe the research process, phrases such as a "shift to business" and "on track" become very meaning filled. For even when we know intuitively that such boundaries in time, conversation and relationship are artificial and inappropriate to the work we are doing together, we can not easily identify and challenge the feelings of concern the master narratives elicit from us.

Lorri Neilsen (1993) seeks to "disrupt and expose the master narratives of the academy, those larger stories which write us even as we act out their plotlines...." (p. 178). In her research with twelve women in a graduate seminar, Neilsen found that "creating a space for the discussion of these common experiences was not necessary; it was what we did and how we worked with one another. The experience of the course and the research we did together was not an event, and certainly not a field setting; it was a relationship" (p. 182).

Paging back through the transcripts of our meetings, I find we too need time to re-establish connections each time we meet. At the beginning of our meetings we are more likely to engage in what could be called personal talk, but our personal conversations do not exclude the professional any more than our professional conversations exclude the personal, and the distinction between the two seems to be somewhat arbitrary and unhelpful as both the public and private are intertwined in the stories of our lives and of our teaching.

Even though Margaret had initially decided she would try to abbreviate the time it would normally take her to establish the kind of trusting relationship necessary to engage in open and honest communication and to this end had made a decision to dispense with ritualistic small talk and safe talk, it quickly became apparent that much of our time together would be spent in establishing relationships and building community. As we came together each week we shared ongoing stories of both our personal and professional lives, and easily slipped back and forth between our stated agenda and these subsidiary conversations. We may have been willing to discuss important issues more quickly than we would have been in most other settings, but running parallel to this mainstream discussion of middle space, which occurred within the sanctuary of "pretrust" we had established, were multiple streams of consciousness engaging our interest and encouraging bonds of caring and trust to develop, which in turn supported our interactions and enriched our shared understandings.

In speaking of the collaborative work done by the Canadian Feminist Ethics Theory Group (1992), Ford addresses the context of "pretrust," which existed among the members of this group as they "acted as if the group was trustworthy even in advance of our having had enough interaction together to know this to be true." The context she describes is similar to the climate which facilitated early interactions in our group. Ford says this commitment to trust reflects a feminist consciousness "of the ways in which women have been silenced and continue to be silenced and, second, of the ways in which the political context of engaging in philosophical discourse makes such 'pretrust' possible in some cases, and impossible or, at least, immoral in others" (p. 134). Elaborating on this statement, she says that "the moral and political appropriateness of pretrust would be more restricted as the political differences between participants diverge" (p. 134) and recommends that the advisability of such pretrust be tested by the sorts of questions posed by Houston and Diller (1987) in the article "Trusting ourselves to care." Despite these cautions, Ford concluded the research group would not have been as successful if they had not begun from this initial position of pretrust, a conclusion I would have to concur could be applied to our group.

Considering that members of our group were all dissatisfied with the story of education as it was often lived in our schools and were therefore committed to looking at how we could create spaces for children within these systems, our moral and political agendas were comfortably compatible if not identical. And while not initially seeking to identify ourselves as feminists, or to label our collaborative work feminist research, we too felt that our voices as women teachers articulating our own experiences from our own perspectives had not been valued or heard and we were anxious to gather round to tell, to listen, to retell, to respond and to respect each other's stories. However, as both the conversation and the story which follows illustrate, we do need to build a context for this storying to take place both in our group and in our classrooms.

## .... Listening to the tears

Transcripts: (pp. 22 - 23)

M. I started to write a story about Blaine, a boy in my class who has two deaf parents. It's not finished. I'm still working on it but I want to share what is done because it is connected to the story I want to tell you today. It started last year when I got called to intervene in a situation in the kindergarten because of my knowledge of sign language.

Blaine's dad, who is a wonderful parent, was at school that day. He had however, grabbed hold of a child who would not stop kicking Blaine. Consequently, the principal asked me to come in to explain the disciplining procedure to him. When other parents came in as volunteers we would advise them if they had a problem they were not expected to discipline but to call us as there were certain procedures we followed. However, because Blaine's father was deaf, nobody had thought to advise him of this. So, when the kicking child had not responded to his attempts to get him to stop, he grabbed the boy and said, "Don't !" thereby precipitating my involvement in the situation.

This year I have Blaine in my grade one/two classroom.

*Today, Blaine almost casually asked me if I knew how deaf people cried. I said, "No."*

*He said, "They don't make a sound you know. But tears just roll down their cheeks."*

*This little confidence got me thinking about how embarrassed he used to be about his parents. He would clam up and turn red if we began talking about parents and our relationship to them. Now he talks about his dad constantly. He was so proud last week when his dad drew the truck and the class ooohed and aaahed. What a long way he's come to be able to tell me these personal things.*

M. I left the story there. I want to do some more description of their family, but I'm sharing it now because of what happened in my classroom today.

Research Journal: As I reflect on Blaine's story and think of what we can learn about relationships and teaching and stories from a little boy who feels safe enough to share his private feelings with his teacher, I feel very close to the heart of middle space. I also become aware that if I want to hear children like Blaine, I can not just listen with my ears because if I do I will miss so much of what remains unspoken and locked up.

### .... A space to sign my name

*M. The students had been really restless all afternoon. It was the last ten minutes of the day so we stopped our work and were playing a game when Blaine's dad came in. He had been dropping by informally almost every other day to spend the last half hour observing the class but on this day all the kids wanted me to ask him to play the game too. While I wondered if I would know all the signs necessary to facilitate his involvement, I decided to ask if he would like to play the game. He agreed to participate so we had to work out his name sign.*

*Of course, he was picked all the time and both he and the students had a great time. When he left, he thanked me for the game. I asked him to come in as a volunteer in the classroom and said that together we could teach the students all the signs they would need.*

*Now all last year, when Blaine was in kindergarten, nobody knew that he and his sister knew sign language. They never signed and they never talked about how they communicated with their parents. In fact, anytime there was any mention of parents they took themselves right out of the conversation.*

*This story is important to our discussion of middle space because it speaks to the acceptance and comfort children experience in school. I wonder how we can expect learning to occur if students are experiencing this level of discomfort about their own situation in school. I look at Blaine now and see that he's free. He's over it. The class is starting to sign. He's not worried about it. They all go, "Wow! You know this other language." I did things in my classroom to facilitate that. At the beginning of the year I'd sign to Blaine even though his body language would be begging me not to do this to him. But I kept on signing to him and then later I started to sign to the whole class. Pretty soon the class was saying, "Get Blaine. We don't understand her."*

*Now the class knows a fair bit of sign language. But I can't help thinking that it is only because I happened to be pulled into kindergarten last year to solve the dilemma involving Blaine's dad and I can't stop worrying that there* *are twenty other kids in my class who probably have stories of equal importance to this one that I know nothing about. So for Blaine, I've made some middle space. I've taken the heat off him and allowed him to be more comfortable telling his personal stories in the public world of school. But what about the twenty other kids who need to know that this classroom is a safe place for them and their stories too? I wonder, how do I help to set all of these children free, how do I unlock their stories? And what about my colleagues? There are a lot of them who need a middle space to live in too.* ..... (Pause)

Research Journal: Sometimes I think the hardest part of creating a middle space is becoming aware of the need for this space in our classrooms, schools and research groups. If we see school as a place that is unconnected to the home, and research as an activity that is unconnected to our lives, and if we sense a resentment of the intrusion of our personal stories into this realm of public knowledge, we will never even start to wonder how we can create a space which welcomes all students' stories, which includes all the teachers' stories.

Reflective Turn: As I reread the story of Blaine's dad, I am drawn to consider the meaning it has for teachers who want to create a middle space in their classrooms. Margaret's story of Blaine's dad causes me to think about the many ways our students might sign their names and about the attentiveness and sensitivity required of the teacher who wants school to be a real space in the middle, not just a corridor between two worlds or a place where students will learn to conform to an image presented as not only superior but as inclusive by the dominant culture. If our students are neither going to remain unnamed and invisible in our classrooms, nor coerced into forsaking their own personal and cultural identities as they identify with the master narratives of our society, there has to be an invitation for them to sign their names with infinite variability and there has to be a promise that this signature will be greeted and responded to with respect and in good company. For this to happen, there has to be a classroom community which accepts "multiplicities, pluralities, and a common world," (Greene, 1988) and a middle space which both includes each student and is reflective of each student's story. Until we recognize our students' particular stories and our students come to know themselves as participants in our classroom stories, they will remain invisible. Their experiences will not become part of the common story. Their names will remain unsigned.

L. .... I think you would know that though. I think within the first two weeks of school you would know if you had a child in your room whose parents signed. You would find it out.
K. Yes. I think you would.

Reflective Turn: But as I restory this conversation, I don't hear Margaret saying she is only concerned about identifying this particular need in her students. I hear her saying this is one need she found out about because of specific circumstances but at the same time expressing concern that she might have remained totally unaware of its existence, and the importance of its existence to the present experience of this child. This realization has caused her to wonder what other unidentified needs might exist, what other stories are waiting to be told. I share her concerns, but I am hopeful that once an individual teacher has become conscious of this dimension of human experience and therefore of teaching, she can never go back to a state of complete unawareness again. She will recognize untold stories are an ever present possibility. I think that with this realization, she will start living and teaching between the lines and in the margins. She will become aware that much of our individual and common experience has been hidden, devalued, excluded or subsumed in the stories of mankind (Minnich, 1990). But as this awareness increases, the dilemmas she experiences will also increase. As sacred stories are challenged by those she is hearing and experiencing, the possibility for internal and external conflict will be heightened. As she lives her teaching life closer to the heart of the teacher - student relationship, the possibility for change will be increased. But however much we might be seduced into thinking middle space can be created behind the closed doors of our classrooms, we can not forget that while it is private space, it is also common space and as such can not be considered something that we can create apart and independently of the political context of our schools and society.

M. I know that after my experience with Blaine, I would be more sensitive to any disability, or maybe more to the point, to anything a child might view as a disability. But I also know there have been times when parents have repeated things their children have told them I've said or done, and I have been completely unaware of the child's feelings or of the effect of my words and actions. These confidences make me feel badly because these children often seem to be getting more out of our relationship than I feel I'm contributing, but at least if I find out about them at the beginning of the year, I can try to pay more attention to the little things that make a difference to each child.

Transcripts: (pp. 50 - 52)
L. I'm always embarrassed when parents tell me something about their child that I don't know but think I should know. I run in the next day to see if they are right and when I find they are, I have to remind myself that I have twenty-eight students and can not compare myself to parents who have lived with one or two or three children for twelve years. No wonder there are gaps in what I know.
D. I've felt my gaps showing too. In my first year of teaching I had failed to notice one of my grade one students was left-handed (loud gasps). It just wasn't that important to me (laughter, yes) and it certainly never occurred to me that it was going to come up as major issue at the first interview. (laughter) But ever since, I have identified the left-handed students on the first day of school. (laughter through this) I haven't been caught with that particular hole showing again. (continued laughter... Oh! That's a groaner. Yes.) I felt a little like the Emperor in his new clothes, sitting there naked, (laughter) pretending to be a teacher, and yet not knowing the child was left-handed. (laughter) But I admit, my inadequacies still get discovered by the parents who ask at the end of the day if their child wore his or her glasses (yes, loud hoots). Did he, or didn't he that is the question? How could I be his teacher and not know? (laughter, yes)
A. I can identify with the feeling of not knowing your students as well as you'd like to. I've felt very sad at the end of the year when I have suddenly realized there is one little girl or one little boy I still don't know.
D. That has happened to me as I'm writing the final report cards. (yes) When I get to that empty page beside the promotion page where I try to write something personal to each child and find I've come up against a wall. (Have a nice summer.) As I stare into the blank page with no words and no stories coming to mind, I become overwhelmed by a feeling of regret for something I have missed.

Research Journal: As teachers we all share stories which reflect our understanding of the importance of developing relationships with students.

Some of our most poignant memories and self-recriminations revolve around those instances in which we sense we have fallen short in our efforts to connect with our students. While we know we are held responsible for teaching the curriculum, we can more readily forgive ourselves for not teaching a whole unit than we can for failing to establish a relationship with each child. We are haunted by blank pages and untold stories, by the lack of middle space we can create for some children. Our hearts are not comforted by knowing we have so many students and so little time.

### **.... A lap for them all**

Transcripts: (pp. 24 - 25)
K. As we're talking, I can't help thinking that numbers make so much difference. Although I don't know how many children you had in your room....
M. I had twenty-four.
K. That was one of the first things I noticed when I moved from a special education class of thirteen children that I have since renamed the gift to a grade two room with twenty-six students. The thirteen children and I were able to form a real relationship. (mmmhmm) Moving from a small number of children like that into a grade two classroom with twenty-six children was overwhelming. They were all around my desk. I'll never forget that feeling of a swarm of bees around my desk. They were all pretty needy children too. (mmmhmm) Because of my special education background it was probably no coincidence that I was given a lot of children (laughter) who had difficulties, but in any case, the differences I experienced between getting to know thirteen children and getting to know a whole grade two class were unbelievable. In my special education room, I had the luxury of being able to take a couple of cars to my house for a party. We went on outings together. Mothers would come and go. We were like a community. In contrast, my grade two class was just a sea of faces. (laughter)
M. I moved from special education into a grade one classroom and found the same thing. With a smaller class, I really got used to working with the individual needs and the individual families and the individual space around each child. I felt so inadequate when I had twenty-five students because I couldn't meet everyone's needs so I was making choices all the time. I can meet your needs today, but I won't be able to meet yours (that's right). That is a sickening feeling.

*Margaret's Reflection: Someone always seems to be quoting studies which conclude that increasing the number of children in a classroom does not have a negative impact on student achievement. I question the scope of the* *achievement, the quality of experience, that is being measured in these studies and wonder if longitudinal studies which included more variables such as the student/ teacher relationship would lead to different conclusions.*

K. I did feel sick. I wished we could have smaller classes (laughs) in order for me to create an environment less like that of a factory line with (yes) the children going through.
M. I've found it is just possible with twenty. But with over twenty students some start slipping through the cracks.
K. it depends on the context too. Many of the grade two students I had that year were coming in not able to read words at the pre-primer level. Teaching these seven or eight in a class of twenty-six made life very difficult for everyone in the room.
M. These children needed to do lap reading but you just don't have a lap big enough for them all and that hurts. (yes, Mmmm).

Transcripts: (p. 32)
M. I think you give parts of yourself away as a teacher, and there comes a point where you can't do that anymore. You don't have anything left. And if there are still five children to go, you're in trouble.

### .... Is it alright if I go phone my dad?

(A continuation of the story of Blaine from two meetings earlier)

Transcripts: ( pp. 169 - 171)

M. Do you remember I told you the story about Blaine, (yes) the little boy whose parents are deaf? (mmmhmm) He's talking a lot about his dad now. (right) Today, he looked up at me and said, "Is it alright if I go phone my dad?" (laughter) His dad can't talk on the phone, but he waited for my reply even though I could tell from the look on his face he knew his request was absurd. As I looked at him he said, "Oh ya, I forgot!" (laughter) I've been thinking about this conversation all day ....
L. Do you think he did forget or....
M. No (no)
L. Maybe he did at one time though and he wanted to show you now....
M. Maybe, but I'm wondering if it is connected to the fact that someone in the community had falsely accused his father of sexual abuse. Even though it wasn't true, I think his dad has been on his mind a lot. Blaine had told me just recently some of the children in the complex were saying his dad growled. So we talked a bit about trusting your friends and he talked about the incident quite openly in our class. They all told him, "We know your dad. He comes to our class all the time. He doesn't growl. He's just wonderful and you should just bring him here and we'll protect him." So he was feeling the support of our

classroom community and I didn't really have to say a lot. I think that's why he asked if he could phone his dad. It was a chance for the whole class to say you can't phone your dad. It was just a belonging kind of thing. It's what the other kids always say but he never gets a chance to say it.

*Margaret's Reflection:* *This is my favourite time of year because the class has become quite loving and supportive.*

Research Journal: The children in Margaret's class have been together long enough for them to build relationships based on acceptance and care. Because of this trusting relationship they are able to give and receive support from each other as well as from her. They are all responsible for creating and maintaining the middle space in their classroom.

Reflective Turn: Joan Tronto (1989), who suggests that we need to consider the political context in which caring is situated, says caring for others implies an on-going relationship and commitment to responding to "the particular, concrete, physical, spiritual, intellectual, psychic, and emotional needs of others" (p. 174). She sees the structures which facilitate this caring in our society as growing out of the family and extending into the caring professions which supplement or substitute for the care which the family provides and says the knowledge which is necessary to engage in the practice of caring is neither abstract nor philosophical, but is constructed as one is in relationship with those one will care for. "Caring rests on knowledge peculiar to the particular person being cared for" (p. 177). This knowledge requires attentiveness to the other person's needs. This attentiveness which embraces both reason (self-knowledge) and emotion (can not occur if the self remains aloof) "involves a commitment of time and effort that may be made at a high price to the self" (p. 178).

Alison Jaggar (1989), who examines the role of emotion in feminist epistemology, says that while emotions have been regarded as subversive of reason and thus knowledge in our western philosophical tradition, they may be "helpful and even necessary rather than inimical to the construction of knowledge" (p. 146). She proposes that as "humans develop and mature in emotions as well as other dimensions; they increase the range, variety, and subtlety of their emotional responses in accordance with their life experiences and their reflections on these" (p. 149) and argues these mature human emotions which include intentional judgments are socially constructed and reconstructed even as they simultaneously inform the way we construct and come to know the world. "The feedback loop between our emotional constitution and our theorizing is continuous; each continually modifies the other, in principle inseparable from it" (p. 163).

K. It's wonderful that he's feeling so comfortable in your room now but what a lot he has had to overcome this year.
M. Yes, but it seems that kids' lives are like that now. There are very few children in my class who are safe.

## PART II

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: THE MORAL RESPONSE

Research Journal: So if that's what children's lives are like now, how can schools receive these private stories into the public domain? How can we listen to the stories and around the stories? How can we respond to what we hear with our ears and with our hearts? What would a morally responsive classroom look like?

### .... Tough love

Transcripts: (pp. 44 - 45)
M. I have a child in my classroom who is at risk. He is the six year old boy who told me he wanted to throw himself under a bus. Christopher is very difficult to work with but I care for him a lot. He is also very intelligent so when I am wearing out, I am able to tell him I need five minutes for myself with no interruptions. He'll sit and watch the clock and then remind me that my five minutes are up. (It would be funny, if it weren't so sad.) It's not long, but at least it gives me some time to regroup, to interact with other students and to summon up the energy to continue to work with him. Anyway, he did some work today. Unfortunately, it was an awful job compared to what I know he can do. I might have been tempted to withhold my response, but he came to me

and said, "So do you like what I did?"

I thought to myself, "What should I do? This kid is pretty fragile." But as I looked at him and heard his unspoken message, I realized I had to tell the truth. So I said, "No I don't like it."

And he said, "How can you say that about my work? You just don't like anything I do."

I said, "Yes I do. You already know that, but next time you ask me if I like something and I say I like it, you're going to know for sure that I really do."

L. I wonder what he would have said if you had asked him if he liked his work?
M. Well, I quite often ask him if he is proud of his work. (yes) But he has said to me, I don't want to know what I think, I want to know what you think. (right) But more than this, I think he wants to know if I tell the truth. Unfortunately, his parents do not. (yes) Maybe that's why I was able to tell him I did not like it even though that's not how I was taught to respond to students in our education classes. I remember vividly being told that you should always find a positive thing to focus on (mmhmm) even if it's just, I like that you got your work done on time. That might be fine in some instances but I don't agree that we should never give honest responses. If we are going to build relationships with our students we need to have honesty and trust between us.

*Margaret's Reflection: Now, I'm wondering if this was the right response, if my response created middle space for him. But I think to create middle space, we may have to look at what a child needs, not just what a child likes.*

Research Journal: Margaret's difficult moral decision was influenced by many factors, but her relationship with her student was ultimately what guided her response to him. She did not forget this child was "pretty fragile." She was motivated to act out of care and concern for him. In listening to this story we did not get the feeling that she chose to tell the truth because she wanted to uphold an abstract principle. After all, she did consider withholding her response initially and is even yet questioning her actions based on what she thinks acting in the best interest of this child might mean. Margaret is motivated to create a middle space for the students in her room. She reflects on her actions and choices from this perspective as well. But it is in knowing she has acted in a caring and moral way toward this child, that she is able to restory the middle space to encompass decisions based on what a child needs, not just what a child likes.

Transcripts: (pp. 77 - 79)

M. I wrote something, but it's not on this topic.
D. That's okay.
M. And it's in progress....
D. Read it
M. .... the ending isn't done....
D. Is it ever?

### .... A place of continuity and caring

*M. For most of us the word holiday conjures up feelings of relaxation, images of enjoyment and a sense of festivity. As holidays approach we gradually begin to step into the mode of pleasant anticipation and thus the holiday season begins. Regretfully this is not so for all people. I am reminded of this ever so slightly each Friday and more strongly when Teachers' Convention, long week-ends, Christmas vacation or spring break draws near. For some students these holidays mark the end of something not the beginning. They rebel forcefully against this ending and work to make the break between school and holidays as painless as possible, painless, that is, for themselves.*

*I noticed this cycle in Christopher at Christmas. He gradually grew more aggressive towards the other children both on the playground and inside the classroom. He began to act out on every occasion and attempted to engage in numerous power struggles. I knew inside he wished I would get angry, lose my temper and begin to yell. The cycle he had once shared with me in a moment of candour was one that he was familiar with at home. But I refused to do as he wished. At times I would literally bite my lip raw in an effort to think my way out of situations rather than giving in to my anger. This is not to say that I did not let him know how I was feeling. I am very careful to say clearly, I am angry or I am not angry to Christopher when he is having a miserable day. He needs to know the boundaries.*

*Somehow, we survived Christmas and continued on through the months. But this week before Teachers' Convention, the cycle began again . By Tuesday afternoon I had had enough. Why did this happen so predictably? If it was simply a fact of missing me, why was he sabotaging the time he had left in school? What caused his apparently uncontrolled actions to be so predictable and what could I do? I began to remember several students to whom this cycle could also apply, and so began my analysis which I think is important to our understanding of middle space.*

*Upon a great deal of reflection I realized this cycle is one lived out by many children who come from troubled homes. For many of these students, school is more than a place for learning. For many it is the only place where* *there is stability and consistency. It is a place that continues. It continues to be warm. It continues to be filled with interesting things, with laughter and even food. It continues to have adults who like and respect children. It continues to have people who listen and who care. Children who act out repeatedly depend on the school to provide the message: we continue to care about you, and about each other. They need this message. It is the message usually given by loving parents, guardians or relatives but whether or not it is the responsibility of the school to be delivering this message is not the issue. For some children, particularly those without supportive adults in their homelife, schools have become a safe place. Thus holidays appear to be the removal of security for them.*

*Christopher is quite bright and has it numbered almost to the minute how long he has to go before the next holiday. He does so out of a need of self-preservation. Three days before the holidays begin he starts to destroy the very place he depends on for security. He does this in the hope that he will find the removal easier. By orchestrating arguments amongst his peers he insures he has no friends. By making playground supervisors deal with misbehaviour, he can convince himself that he does not like school anyway. By making his teacher angry he can convince himself that school is not the haven he once considered it to be. So before each holiday I must tell Christopher and other students like him that they are worthwhile, that school will still be here, that they can fight or argue or rebel as much as they like but still we will continue. Still the school will continue. For as long as Christopher needs me to reassure him before, after and even during the holidays, I will continue.*

(Long silence)

L. But who is there for you? How long can you continue if you have no support?
M. It has to be . . . . It has to be the other teachers.
D. The teachers have to be there for each other.
L. Yes, exactly. The unbelievable amount of energy and care you need if you are going to be there for him and that he needs from you, have got to come from somewhere. You need a middle space of continuity and caring too. You do.
A. And if you feel like you have no support it is very tough.
M. That may be why more and more teachers are getting more and more tired. I mean, I'm doing this for Christopher but I'm also doing it for Andre and Craig. There's a chapter two to this story because coming back from holidays is often even worse. I went through it after the last holidays. His inappropriate behaviour usually lasts until into the afternoon when I finally say I will not tolerate this behaviour any longer. Then he says, "Okay, sorry Mrs. Allen," and settles back into school. With Christopher I have finally figured something out. You know how you usually try to deescalate a situation? With Christopher I

have to escalate them. I bump them up as fast as possible so he has the struggle he needs to become reintegrated into our classroom community by nine fifteen in the morning. I timed it today because I knew it was coming. It gets shorter everytime though. He needs me to say, "I won't tolerate this behaviour any longer. Let's start again." And then he's fine.

A. Why does he have this need for you to say I'm angry or I'm not angry?

M. I think it's because his parents are extremely ambiguous with him. When they're mad in their family they usually pout so he never knows when the anger is over and as a result .... he's the one who was trying to commit suicide. So one of the things I'm supposed to do with him is (be clear about your feelings?) Yes.

That Tuesday afternoon when he did the one thing that will make me lose my temper, (which is to hurt another child) he had done everything else that he thought would irritate me. Everything, but none of it would make me get angry until he hurt somebody and then I was just furious and I said to him, "I'm so angry right now I can't even speak." But he was relieved. He needed to know what the final limit was. So today I pushed it. I pushed him toward the boundaries. He started testing the limits, but instead of deescalating the situation I tried to escalate his period of reentry. I decided to see if my intuition was right and by nine-thirty it was over and he had a really good day. I never learned that in teacher training.

Research Journal: Christopher's experience, as storied by Margaret, helps us understand the middle space because it draws us to the edges, to the abyss at the edge of the world. To feel accepted and safe, Christopher needed to know where the limits of his space were located. He needed to know that it was bounded, that it had edges. But it is important to note that these edges were defined within his relationship with Margaret, a person he knew he could trust. The edges of his middle space were defined by the honesty of her interactions with him, and without these boundaries the middle space would not have existed for him.

However, Margaret's story also raises concerns about a middle space of continuity and caring for teachers. As I listen to her story, I wonder if teachers feel their schools and their colleagues provide this place? Do they feel they will be safe if they talk about their need for support or are they more apt to hide these needs for fear they will be perceived as inadequacies by their colleagues?

Transcripts: (pp. 93 - 97)

D. Did anybody else write anything they'd like to share?
A. I did. It's a short story about a little boy in my classroom the first year I taught. I can't remember how to spell his name, and it's not finished....

### .... No room at the Inn

A. *Terrence was a little boy in my grade two class in northern Saskatchewan. He was scared to be there. He spoke almost no English. His wide eyed fear, his tiny brown body, his curly long tangled hair made me think of a frightened animal, a wild animal who had wandered in by some mistake and who was now trapped in my classroom. I wanted to help but did not know how.*

*The structure of my classroom, for it could hardly be called his classroom, was foreign to the world he knew. His lack of familiarity with the school setting, compounded by problems outside of the school, kept him from entering in. I sensed he did not feel welcome but I did not know how to invite him in. I was just in my first year of teaching, I had only a few locally adapted curriculum resources. There was a caribou kit but little else that would help Terry or others like him feel more comfortable in this strange place. While local materials were used to decorate our classroom and frequent outings into the village were planned, it was most definitely my space and it reflected my agenda.*

*Terry did not become a well adapted member of the class. The local women said that his family life was unhappy. I never saw any concrete evidence of this although his explosive tantrums definitely pointed to problems outside of the classroom. There was certainly no referral system in place or anyone there I could use as a resource person. For a first year teacher, it was quite an eye opener! Although I got used to these outbursts and the class came to ignore them during the year, the end of the year came and Terry was still on the outside looking in. My room remained closed to him even though he was trapped in our midst.*

*Anne's Reflection:* *Looking back, I can now understand many things that might have made a difference to my experience with Terry. I had equally troubled children in later years in other communities, but I was able to relate to them in more helpful ways because of the ways my classroom structure and space had changed since that first year. Over the years, my classroom came to be less controlled by me. There was a greater sense of community and group involvement. If Terry had been a student in these later classes, he might have liked school more. He might have felt welcomed and respected. He might have been able to enter into the classroom.*

*This story and the reflection process have encompassed a lot of space* *and a lot of time. I've mentioned students before who I feel have gone through the cracks because I have not been able to establish relationships with them, but Terry has caused me to reflect on my practice more than any other student I've had. I learned a lot from having him in my room and from thinking back on my experience with him. I feel I knew so little about what a classroom could be when I started teaching and unfortunately, in that school there was no middle space where teachers could help each other figure things out.*

Research Journal: Anne, I feel Terry's story helps us to understand middle space as an invitation to enter in, to participate. But if students are going to feel welcome, this space will have to make room for them on their terms. Although we've come to see relationships as central to creating middle space, we also have to construct a middle space if these relationships are to develop. It's a reflexive relationship.

D. I have a story to share that relates to both Margaret's and Anne's stories. It is part of the ongoing dilemma I experience as I try to figure out how I can relate, respect and respond to the students in my classes in ways that will make space for them but which will also leave space for me.

### .... To thine ownself be true

Transcripts: (pp.149 - 155)

D. *I first encountered Jeffrey on the grade one playground. He was not in grade one and I knew he was not supposed to be there, but I was to quickly learn that Jeffrey was not particularly interested in what he was supposed to be doing. But I'm rushing ahead of myself because on that first meeting all I knew about Jeffrey was that he was in a place he was not supposed to be in and that some trouble appeared to be brewing.*

*The nature of his problem has been forever erased from my memory by the explosive reaction I got to the kind and maternal question I addressed to him. Neither do I remember what the question was, because it is also a lost detail of this first meeting. It is just in retrospect that I am able to say it was kind and maternal, because that is the manner in which I address questions to misplaced or misguided children on the playground. But of course Jeffrey did not know this about me, and I did not know that my misguided question was going to ignite this little dynamo into a boiling rage.*

*I stood speechless as I watched him turn from pink to red to purple as he shook with anger, and uttered some completely unintelligible words from between clenched teeth. I did not know what the problem was, and no one* *had advised me about this potential supervision disaster. But as soon as my scattered senses would permit me, I led him into the ECS portable on our playground and gave him and the best description of the incident that I could manage at the time to his teacher. Then I quickly left, very relieved that this child I now knew as Jeffrey, was someone else's responsibility!*

*That this was not too noble a sentiment on my part, I learned later in the day from other staff members who told me that this teacher had already managed a remarkable improvement in Jeffrey's behaviour since the previous year when he had come to her class. I felt badly that I hadn't noticed the progress, but as the picture was painted more clearly from those who had known him before his second year in kindergarten I must admit my relief grew rather than diminished with the knowledge that this child was in her room and not mine. However, as is often the case, my relief was to be short lived as the next September this new improved Jeffrey came to my room.*

*I think that the first two days were fairly uneventful. I know I did my best to circumvent any problems; but by the end of the third day, through no fault of my own, I had once more incited Jeffrey's wrath. It was dismissal time and I had told the students who were walking home that they could leave first. Next I told the students who were riding the buses they could either find their own buses or wait for me and I would walk with them. The room almost emptied and I prepared to walk to the buses with students who still wanted some help when some noise caught my attention and I spotted Jeffrey in his desk. He was beginning to tremble like an active volcano and was turning the same colour I remembered from the previous year. Very worried, I asked him why he hadn't left yet. He replied through his clenched teeth that I hadn't said he could go. Totally perplexed, and knowing he didn't ride a bus, I told him that I had let the town students leave first. "Oh no you didn't," he choked, "You said that anyone who was walking could leave and I have to ride my bike." I was so relieved I almost laughed. Luckily I didn't as I was soon to learn that this type of reaction to his rage from me or other students would only prolong the tirade. Anyway the immediate problem was solved and I felt like I had emerged more intact than I had the first time he had erupted. That night I went home more confident than I had been since I knew he was coming. My triumph was short lived however because the quiet atmosphere had been broken and almost every day for the rest of that year Jeffrey presented me with some problem.*

*It wasn't always his temper because there were periods of time when it was not evident, but underlying that temper there was a stubbornness and determination to have his own way that far surpassed my energy to discourage this wilful behaviour. He would never simply do what he was asked to do, or what everyone else was doing. I'm sure every teacher knows someone a bit like Jeffrey. When all the rest of the class painted airplanes, he folded his. When everyone else was crossing out the wrong answer he'd circle the right ones. It just didn't matter what the task, Jeffrey had his own way of doing it. For everything I suggested he had an alternative, a better plan, sometimes easier, sometimes more elaborate but never just what he was* *supposed to do and I must admit there were days when I could have cheerfully wrung his neck and left him for a sacrifice at the altar of blind obedience. Me, the teacher who values creativity and individual expression, totally paranoid because one small six year old boy could never do what he was asked, never mind what he was told to do.*

*It washed over me. Relentless as the waves in the ocean, receding briefly but then returning. Everyday he had a new scheme, sometimes he even had one for the morning and the afternoon. And sometimes they were good schemes, like the day he went home and made hats for everybody in the class to wear the next day, or the way he would organize every willing body on the playground into teams at recess. But sometimes I couldn't stand his organizing, like the times he would bring a whole bag of toys for show and tell when I had told everyone they could only bring one thing so he had concocted a story that wove them all together (so I couldn't object) right on the spot. And the reason I couldn't stand it was that I knew I was being manipulated, not because I couldn't have stopped him, not because I was afraid of his temper anymore, but because I wasn't really sure of how I wanted the balance of control and creativity to operate in my room. I was not only bumping into him, I was bumping into myself. I wasn't really sure if something should be stopped just because I found it hard to incorporate it into my class or day or lesson. So for quite awhile Jeffrey lived in peace while my temper looked much like his, except that I kept mine inside and no one knew it was there except me.*

*Then one day Jeffrey pushed me over the line. I don't mean that I lost my temper, but actually I guess metaphorically speaking I did. He had his desk in a terrible mess, as it usually was because he kept and collected all the scraps that everyone else threw away to make things with at home, and I decided that it had to be cleaned because everything was falling out and he couldn't find anything he needed. It was just as simple as that. His mess was not enhancing his creativity and it was distracting from the smooth running of the class and I wanted it cleaned up with no questions asked. This as you know by now was not Jeffrey's style. He muttered. I ignored him. He grumbled louder. I ignored him. He started to lose his temper and swear. I quit ignoring him as his desk was about to be tipped over. In fact I marched him right out into the hallway and told him to stand there without moving one inch until I came back, which was actually a good time later. Of course by the time I reappeared he had his usual line of reasoning ready for me but when he saw it wasn't going to work and that I was not listening to his plan his temper started up. So, I told him I would leave and when he had cooled off I would come back out. Awhile later I went out to him again and he said he was cool and ready to come back into the class. I told him I was pleased to hear it and that he could come back into the room if he walked to his desk without kicking, swearing, or doing anything else to disrupt the class. He agreed.*

*Of course being Jeffrey, he could not let me have the last word. All the way back to his desk he kept muttering, "Cool as a cucumber, I'll just follow my feet cool as a cucumber" over and over as he walked slowly back in. None of* *the other kids could believe this very subdued Jeffrey and they were all very quiet as he made his way slowly to his desk. All of them except one little boy who couldn't resist asking me, "Why is he talking about salads?" in a tone that implied someone in our room had definitely crossed the line. Luckily though he thought it was Jeffrey, and no one knows except me who was really on the other side of the line that afternoon.*

M. Oh, that's great.
D. Only in retrospect! That was my third year of teaching.
M. Oh I have a student just like that, just like that. You could be writing about him.
D. I know. He's the same one I'm talking about when you say you just don't want to listen to another thing. You don't want to explain another thing. You don't care how wonderful it is.
M. Sometimes all I have to do is say Christopher that's one. And when I'm in that tone of voice he doesn't ask what it is for. He knows. But if he does ask me why, I say you are smart enough to figure it out. See if you can and then tell me what you think. And he usually does. It's something I can't really describe. You've described it as well as it can be described. Sometimes you have to give yourself that space otherwise you don't survive.

Research Journal: If the teacher's space and the student's space are different, how can we build a middle space which includes them both?

D. I've been thinking about middle space for a long time. It's not a new topic for me....
M. I love that.
D. ....trying to work out where I stand in the classroom and in my relationship to and with students, and constantly moving the boundaries.
M. It's funny that he had to collect all that stuff. Christopher does that too. He collects everything even rummaging through the garbage.
D. Oh yes, Jeffrey too.
M. He's always coming up to me and asking, "Do, do you really want to throw this away? You could use this you know. Look at this." And half the time I think he's right. (Laughter)
D. But all the stuff keeps falling out of Jeffrey's desk.
M. All his collection.... (laughter and overlapping talk)
D. The janitor was always getting annoyed with me because everytime he moved that row of desks everything fell out of Jeffrey's desk.
M. Christopher has sharing in his desk from months previous because everytime I say why don't you take all your sharing home he says, "No because I forgot to tell one thing about it and I'm still going to." (laughter)
K. It's kind of precious though.... (laughter and overlapping talk)
D. Precious? Well, he was one of the most imaginative students (yes, I'll bet)

I've ever taught. He had wonderful ideas. He'd come to school with his own agenda each day. I don't think he ever realized that the school had it's own curriculum. (overlapping hysterics, own agenda) He was so used to planning that he just.....

M. That's exactly Christopher! Sometimes I'm in the middle of saying something and he fills words in for me. (laughter) Today I said to the class, "If you're having problems....." and he said, "understanding it." "No, no!" I said. "Finding your materials was the direction I was going in Christopher." (laughter) Or he'll interrupt me and say "Wait a minute, I have a really good idea. We could do this, this, this and this."

D. Well, we could only have kept up to Jeffrey's plans if we didn't have anything else to do in the day! "Yes, Jeffrey. If I didn't have ten more things that we are supposed to be doing in my day plan, I could turn this room into a castle and the students into knights and you into the director and producer of the play!"

L. But you'll never forget Jeffrey and Christopher. (Laughter)

D. How right you are. But it's not just because of their behaviour that we won't forget them but because of the way they've forced us to confront our selves and our conceptions of teaching! This story lies at the heart of middle space. It parts the veils and dispels the illusions.

Research Journal: I hate to break into our hysterics with some more middle space talk, but I wonder can there be a middle space that does not take the child's agenda seriously? Can there be a middle space that forces the child to constantly fragment his or her life into home and school compartments and interests with no interaction between the two worlds?

*Anne's Reflection: I think not.*

But even as I make room for the child's agenda, I am constantly aware there is a program of studies which must be covered. I think as we look at how we can create a middle space for the child, we will have to recognize our responsibility as teachers is neither to replace the child's agenda with the school's agenda nor the school's agenda with the child's agenda but to look for ways to invite the child to enter into the school's agenda and to ensure the school's agenda is respectful and responsive to the child.

*Lisa's Reflection: I think the key to these experiences is understanding that*

*Jeffrey and Christopher felt cared for. No matter how much they pushed you, and no matter how often you reached the point where you said we are going to do it my way this time, they felt cared for and valued and loved. I am sure of it. I am sure if you were to talk to Jeffrey so many long years later he would say he felt good about being in your classroom even though there were days when you didn't get along. And that is because of how you lived in that space with each other.*

(Pause)

### .... Common ground

M. Christopher is one of the only students who I feel infringes on my space. Usually I try to get students into my space as much as possible and I try to get into their space as much as possible, but with Christopher I feel a need to divide the space. This is my space. That's your space. And it's not only a physical thing.

Research Journal: Is there room for my space and your space in a middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: There must be.*

As we struggle to create a middle space where plurality and diversity are welcomed, we also struggle with the need to preserve our own individuality, our own inner space.

Transcripts: (pp. 147 - 149)
L. I love hearing students put an argument together.
M. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't respect the student's right to have an opinion or to argue a point. I don't expect them all to agree with me but at the same time I get tired of having to have a reason in place for everything I do. I get tired of always having to reach consensus or explain myself to twenty-six children!
A. I get tired of that at home with just one child!
K. I've noticed as I've observed my sister-in-law and my niece that there are certain rules which are not open to questioning (yes) and some which are open to negotiation.
M. I do think, within the school culture, there are rules everyone needs to follow.
L. I guess it depends which rules you feel comfortable with them pushing or not pushing.
M. And that changes with different teachers.

L. It does, and it changes with kids too. Although there are some rules that I would not change for any child. For example, respecting other people's space and property is not a negotiable rule at any point in time. But there are some rules that I might change for specific children. However, for me, part of the dilemma of creating middle space for my students in school is caused by teachers who view or value which rules and responsibilities are important so differently from me.

Research Journal: As I reflect on Lisa's remarks, I wonder if we are not fooling ourselves when we think we can create middle space for our students when we can not create a middle space with the teachers in our schools. Is it just easier to imagine we created middle space in our classrooms, where we ultimately retain power, than it is to convince ourselves we created middle space for teachers who are our equals in the hierarchy.

*Margaret's Reflection: To me it seems that it would be easier to create middle space in my classroom than in the school, but that may very well be because I have power in my classroom even when I choose to run it in a collaborative way, whereas in the school the power at least theoretically resides equally among all teachers and we therefore are more sensitive to instances where middle space is being compromised.*

*Anne's Reflection: I think it is more difficult to create a middle space in the school. Teachers have so many different perspectives that it is tough to do. Not that we have to achieve consensus to have a middle space but we do have to make room for everyone. I really hope I make room for the differences in the children in my classroom. But I can see it would be easier for a child to be silenced than another teacher, so it could be difficult to know if every child felt there was a middle space. Teachers tend to be more vocal, and maybe more able to identify that the problem in a school is a lack of middle space. I think students might react more intuitively to this, because they haven't been as socially conditioned as we have, but their feelings might not be put into words that could be heard by anyone but a very intuitive teacher.*

M. Creating a common ground has a lot to do with respect. Do you have respect for other people and their space? But then again, different people interpret respect in different ways. I know some teachers see any questioning by the child as a sign of disrespect.

Research Journal: It seems to me that one of the people in this relationship is operating from a position of inherent power. Can we have a middle space where only one person is owed respect while the other person is given this consideration only at our discretion?

Margaret's Reflection: *No.*

Anne's Reflection: *Yet it is hard to get away from having the teacher's voice carry more weight than an individual student's voice. It is so ingrained. While it is important to respect others, I think, as Lisa says, there are some basic tenets that are not up for negotiation, in any classroom.*

M. I am usually willing to tolerate that questioning. Or perhaps tolerate is the wrong word, because in most cases I welcome it but I can also get to the point where I say, "That is just the way it is. Let's live with it and go on."
A. But so much depends on how you come to that point. How do you treat the child and the child's agenda in the process?
M. It is important to look at the relationship over longer periods of time than one particular incident.
A. I'm thinking of kindergarten where students can certainly come up with reasons and justifications. At that age it's very easy to squelch that questioning, that desire to make sense of the world of school and in the process to squelch them and their desire to be actively involved in the schooling process. Maybe it's not so easy to do this to an older child but a lack of respect for any child really bothers me. It does not matter whether you are going to end up agreeing with them or not, the respect for the child in this process is the central thing. I'm sure every child and teacher must have heard or told many stories of how disrespectful teachers can be to students, or for that matter the lack of respect administrators have shown towards teachers and students. To me disrespect cuts the middle space down quicker than anything else. A lack of respect for others eliminates the possibility that a middle space can exist . . .

## PART III
## A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT: LIFE-LINES IN THE MIDDLE SPACE

Reflective Turn: Creating a middle space for students and teachers is dependent upon our ability to build a community of support, a connected community. However, this can not be achieved without respect for all members of the community. A connected community reflects an attentiveness to the needs of all participants and provides a caring and moral response to the individual and the group. Creating such community requires that teachers become reflective practioners who remain open to alternative ways of being and that administrators support the development of thoughtful practice.

Although we can come to understand those attitudes and dispositions which lie at the heart of middle space and identify those things which are obstacles to the creation of a middle space, a policy for creating a middle space can not be written nor can it be mandated because middle space is created within the hearts, minds and actions of each individual and constructed by each community. Through telling our stories and engaging in collaborative dialogue with others in our community, we can begin to both name and look beyond the obstacles which confront us to the possibility of wider spaces and of middle spaces.

Maxine Greene (1988), speaks of education as a means whereby individuals can "be provoked to reach beyond themselves in their intersubjective space... to become mindful, to share meanings, to conceptualize, to make varied sense of their lived worlds" (p. 12). But she laments that in a society which values effectiveness, proficiency, efficiency, high technology and economic competitiveness this seldom occurs. She perceives the failure of the education system to open possibilities and to educate for freedom is not identified as an obstacle by most teachers and fears that teachers who do identify these values as problematic are silenced because they lack the support necessary to tell their stories.

> "The person who might indeed find relevant to his/her sense of vocation the dehumanizing forces in the society is not asked to notice them and perceive them as obstacles to becoming. Nor is much done to empower students to create spaces of dialogue in their classrooms, spaces where they can take initiatives and uncover humanizing possibilities" (p. 13). "The rebellious teacher, the 'reflective practitioner' (Schon, 1983) is asked to tamp down dissonant conceptions of what education might be .... We do not know how many educators see present demands and prescriptions as obstacles to their own development, or how many find it difficult to breathe. There may be thousands who, in the absence of support systems, have elected to be silent" (Greene, 1988, p. 14).

## .... Uncomfortable questions

Transcripts: (pp. 200 - 201)
K. Debbie, can you talk about what you mean by this?
D. Okay, just let me find the pages.
L. The conversation is on pages 147 - 155 in the transcripts. (Reading: "Are we kidding ourselves that middle space can be created in our classrooms when we can't accept and make space for this diversity and individuality in the school?")
D. I was wondering if we were actually creating middle spaces in our classrooms and in our schools when these spaces are only big enough to include those people with views similar to our own. Although working with people who hold philosophically compatible views may be our vision of utopia, it is not what I think we are saying the middle space is. If we think about middle space as a place where a diversity of views are welcome, each person has to be able to bring
A. A different philosophy
D. ...Of who she or he is into the middle space and a multiplicity of voices have to be heard and respected. I guess I'm also saying that in creating middle spaces we can not just be forcing a different group of people to the margins. It would be nice to believe that my philosophy is superior to those I disagree with and that if it was in place we would have middle space, but I do not see middle space as a place where people speak in unanimity, but rather as a place where multiplicity can thrive.

Research Journal: Kelly, I'm still thinking about your question about my reflections on middle space. I think we need to ask ourselves some uncomfortable questions. If on a school level, we have a hard time accepting each other's differences - creating a middle space for the teachers who work there - I'm wondering if perhaps we are being less than honest to think that we are doing this for our students within our own classrooms. I think I need to ask myself whose middle space it is. Am I creating a classroom built totally on my philosophy or am I allowing everyone to enter in? What is the student's experience of middle space in my classroom? At the school level, where there are other adults who can "answer back" (to what I'm saying/doing), I don't think it would be as easy to delude myself that I am respecting differences in people as it would be in my own classroom where students (like myself as a child) might not be voicing their feelings of disconnection or alienation. So I guess I'm asking, am I more able to convince myself that my goal is to create middle space in my classroom because of the power structure that's inherent there, because I'm the one ultimately responsible for the classroom environment? Or is what I'm doing, really just setting up an environment I am more comfortable in but one which is not necessarily a middle space for others?

Group's Reflective Restorying:
L. The power issues are definitely there.
K. Do you remember the story I told about the two children who were really not feeling comfortable with the centres in my room? (Yes) That experience was an opportunity for me to think about what I was doing in my room (Right. Yes.) Hopefully, if I use those types of opportunities to question my practice, and I am open to questioning my practice from the perspective of my students, I will be able to provide a middle space that includes them all. For me, those two children were critical. I had to rethink what I was doing in light of their experience. I could no longer think that I knew what was right for everyone before I had given them the chance to speak. And I think that as long as I come in with basic respect for children, (yes) which for me is the bottom line, it will be easier to see the things that either create or diminish the middle space that is available to each child. It will be easier to understand their homes and their cultures and what school should be like for them as well. But then of course if you're fighting (and I felt like I was fighting) against the philosophy of a school that did not really respect the children, it is harder to create the middle space even within your own classroom. I knew that I had to leave that school because it was not a school where I saw us working collaboratively toward the same goals.

Kelly's Reflection: *Collaboration is something I think we should talk more about because I think it can only begin when we respect each other's differences. I had been in a school where the principal respected everybody's differences, and the differences I saw between not only how the two staffs worked together but between how they enhanced or diminished the teacher's ability to create middle space for all children were really amazing. Because the principal showed respect for us, we could create a middle space that was very professional and which in turn enabled us to create a middle space for the students in the school and in our classrooms. I have to say honestly that that was probably the best teaching experience I have had.*

Research Journal: So, as you're reflecting on this experience, do you think the principal was able to create a middle space with the teachers in that school much like the one we as teachers want to create with our students? I hear you saying that part of what made that school both personally and professionally memorable for you was his respect for the individuals in the school, the collaboration between teachers and the opportunities he was able to open up for this type of interaction to occur and to be affirmed.

Anne's Reflection: *The administration plays a critical role in enabling others. My experiences support this completely!*

K. His actions were very supportive. Through being kind and respecting other people....
A. ....The staff as well as the students....
K. Absolutely, he was able to open spaces for us all.
L. That's just the point I was about to make. Respect for the staff is essential. (Yes.)
K. In the school where there was such a big difference between my philosophy and the school's philosophy as lived out, I had no middle space. I couldn't live with that staff but they couldn't live with me either. There were some heated debates which were documented on my final appraisal by the principal who said I could not get along with my teaching partner. I went to the principal and said if disagreeing with a teacher who told my children they should go back to kindergarten because they could not read meant that I was not respecting someone with a different philosophy then so be it. I would have to say that in this instance I'm glad I don't talk that way or think that way, and that I have no intention of respecting that teacher's philosophy because it is disrespectful of the child. I'm not being defensive. It's a fact. You can write it down as many times as you want and I will reply to your assessment in the same way. I knew that I could not stay in that school. I was dying there. I felt so unhealthy. (Yes)

Transcripts: (pp. 219 - 222)
K. But even as I say this, I want you to know that I can respect people who are very different from myself. There was a teacher across the hall from me who I got along with very well even though her style was very different from mine. She thought teaching children manners was very important and had a Snoopy Corner with rules for correct behaviour. I personally thought her emphasis on manners was rather extreme but the kids in her class were treated with respect. You could tell they all liked her even though it must have been a little strange for some of them because they came from pretty rough neighbourhoods. Although it was very different from what I would have done, her teaching was done in a caring and respectful way. I guess that is something I keep going back to. That is my bottom line. I can not accept disrespect for children or for teachers.
L. I reread my thesis the other day and one of the things that I found in my research was that in order to know how to care for others we need to know what it's like to be cared for ourselves. Although some people might say they

were uncared for and know how this made them feel and how they would like to be treated, and so try to treat other people this way, I think this is an exception in human behaviour. I think that generally it is because we are really cared for that we have a sense of what that feels like and how important caring is. I also think, to know respect for what you do in your classroom as a teacher, is to know how to respect children and to construct a middle space wherein they will be respected. If you are not getting that respect, then that feeling can be played out in your classroom too. (Yes)
K. Well almost like what you were talking about in a sense Anne isn't it? (Yes)
L. Exactly. (Yes)
A. It filters through.

### .... Collaborative connections

Transcripts: (pp. 90 - 93)

D. *It was a typical Monday morning in May. Along with several other teachers, I was drinking coffee in the staffroom as we talked about how we really needed to go to our classrooms while simultaneously rattling off a dozen reasons why we were not doing so. Completely oblivious to this mood of group-sanctioned lethargy, Sharron, a grade four teacher in our school, bounced into the staffroom emitting more enthusiasm for life than could be tolerated let alone appreciated at that time of the morning, the week, the year. But undeterred by this collective indifference, she proceeded to tell us all about the wonderful science workshop she had attended on the weekend as we listened halfheartedly and waited patiently for her to stop talking so we could resume our comfortable and communal inertia. At one point however, I did feel a bit sorry for her and tried to put an interested look onto my face as she talked about something she called stuff boxes. But as the first bell rang, I escaped down the hall to my grade one room without giving these boxes another thought.*

*Sharron, however, had obviously not dismissed either the stuff boxes or my interest so readily, as after school she bounced into my room ready to resume the conversation we had so abruptly terminated that morning. To say I was even less interested in this topic at three-thirty after a day of supervision than I had been in the morning is being kind. However, I must admit I was surprised by her continued enthusiasm as it had been my usual experience to see these conference highs recede much more quickly than this when confronted with the real world of school. So thinking there had to be something I had missed in all of this, I decided to stop my all consuming task of salvaging the last of our pencils from the janitor's broom and ask her to explain these boxes to me once more. As she did this, I had to admit my curiosity was piqued. They did sound like an innovative and integrated way to teach science and language arts. But what really fascinated me was the plan she outlined to have our two classes work together.*

Since my grade one students were already working on the theme of creepy crawlies, she proposed that she would have her grade fours construct their stuff boxes on this topic. She needed us to be the audience for her students' research projects. Each student in her room would pick a creepy crawly to research. Then they would read and write both scientific and fictional stories about these creatures to include in their boxes. They would make board games, construct models, draw pictures, plan quizzes and crosswords and fill their boxes with interesting artifacts all of which they would use to teach their grade one buddies about their selected animals. As I listened to her talking, I forgot it was Monday. I forgot it was May. I soon became as excited as she had been that morning and was unwilling to have either my students or myself remain passive in this undertaking until the "Creepy Crawly Buddy Day" actually arrived.

We schemed and planned how my kids would use math class to make "Krispy Kritters" from rice krispies to share with their new grade four buddies on what was now to be our Creepy Crawly picnic. We also decided the grade ones would take responsibility for planning and making up creepy crawly games and races for this event. They would write us invitations. We would respond with thank you notes. We would arrange meetings between the classes so the kids could put faces on the audience who were promptly renamed "our buddies." As Sharron finally left my room, I realized I had an embodied knowledge that one and one is more than two. The collaboration between us was energizing and motivating. Thinking back, I just wonder why we were so pleasantly surprised to find our collaboration had the same effect on our students?

Creepy Crawly day was a great success. But when it was over the kids in our classes were not ready to have it end. They had made friends. They had established relationships. They had become innovators and creators. For the rest of the year, which suddenly was all too short they wrote each other stories and letters. They crossed rigidly enforced playground boundaries to visit each other at recess. They made each other presents. One of Sharron's most difficult students who had been buddied up with a very needy student in my room amazed us both with his careful attentiveness. And in the midst of this, Sharron and I started to plan for the next year. We were not content to let this buddy stuff lay dormant until next spring! We brainstormed for all the places we could connect our curriculum and our classrooms. This was powerful stuff. Fortunately for us, it being May and all, no one really noticed us.

The following September, we buddied up immediately. Maybe, because it was the beginning of a new year people finally started to notice our collaboration. We told those who asked us what we were up to but made no effort to inform the staff or the administration of our collaborative adventure. I suppose we were just too enthusiastic however, because at the June staff meeting that year we were all told that next year each class in the school would be assigned a buddy class. Sharron and I looked at each other in panic. Immediately after the meeting we went to see the principal to state our *intention to continue our buddy relationship. We were told that we would make good buddies for other teachers who had never worked with anyone else. Perhaps rather selfishly, we said that other teachers should work out their own collaborative relationships, but that we wanted to remain together. In the end we were left feeling like we were not very good team players but to our relief, when the buddy sheet came out in September we were put together for one more year.*

*Some of the new buddy assignments worked out quite well, with classes visiting each other more than once during the year. Others grudgingly complied while some went on working in isolation as they always had. Sharron and I continued our collaborative relationship for the year, but the next year the buddy classes were rearranged and we were each paired up with someone we could help more than each other. We were told, the attempt to implement collaboration through the buddy class pairings had not gone as well as it could have, so we were to be separated so we could spread the gospel of collaboration to the unconverted.*

*We continued to meet for those very special events we just couldn't give up but our bond was considerably weakened. My new buddy and I had our classes do two activities together that year. Her heart really wasn't in the project and she considered it a waste of valuable school time. The following year I moved to grade three. I wanted to be reassigned as Sharron's buddy class, but in our school it had been decided that grade three classes were to be assigned to grade one classes and grade four classes were to be assigned to grade two classes. They just knew it could not possibly work any other way, so my request was not granted.*

M. And this isn't just a story, it's what really happens! (yes)

A. It's really ironic to think that you would have to be assigned to work collaboratively with someone, and that you would have no voice in deciding who you would like to work with.

M. This same thing happens quite frequently with co-operative grouping of students too. My daughter has often come home lamenting that the groups in her class have been changed. Because she is articulate and has good leadership skills, she tends to be placed in groups that can benefit from her abilities. No one ever seems to ask which group would be of most benefit to Caitlin. No one ever seems to care that they are disrupting relationships and breaking the connections that are necessary to support the work in these groups.

D. And really, this is no less respectful of students than it is of teachers is it?

M. No, it's not fair at all. It's the same as being arbitrarily matched up with a buddy class. That has happened to me too. You just hold your breath waiting for the buddy class announcement. Sometimes it works out. Sometimes it doesn't, but in either case the lack of understanding about how relationships between teachers, students, or teachers and students are formed is not conducive to creating a space in the middle for any of the participants.

Research Journal: As I restory my experience in the present context of trying to understand the middle space of curriculum, I am concerned with the underlying assumption held by the administrators in this school because while I speak of one particular experience, it can not be regarded as an isolated incident but rather as a plot which is all too familiar to the stories of teachers and students in many different schools. This plot, as it is storied out, reveals a reliance on externally established guidelines and policy rather than a faith in individually initiated relationships and professional collaboration to effect desired changes in schools.

That this story is so readily identified as part of our collective experience as students and teachers "and this isn't just a story, it's what really happens" causes us to wonder how little is known about building supportive communities in our schools. Unfortunately, so many of the positive community building things that teachers and students do as they are in a respectful and responsive relationship with one another are spoiled once these behaviours and practices become identified as procedures that can be mandated in school improvement plans. Recognizing the merit of certain practices we want to extend the benefits to everyone, but rather than creating a climate wherein the practice can develop naturally, we try to legislate it into existence. Neglecting to understand how change is facilitated, we then either blame the teachers for resisting change or conclude that the practice was unsound because we do not get the results we want.

Currently, practice is being mandated and flexibility denied in the inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom. As we looked for connections between the construction of middle space and our ability to build supportive communities, this became an important topic in our group.

### .... Building bridges

Transcripts: (pp. 335 - 336)

L. How does your school provide for students with special needs?
M. We don't have one fixed program. It changes each year or during the year to meet the needs of the kids. This year the students started off the year in a

pull-out program, but after about six weeks the special needs teacher began to work in the classrooms with the home room teachers (mmmhmm). Whereas last year she started out working in the classrooms with the students, but moved later to a pull-out program. (mmm) So it really depends on the children. Last year I had five special needs children in my classroom, but three of them didn't work with the special needs teacher because they needed the consistency of being with one person all the time. But at the same time, I had four other kids not designated special needs who really needed extra help and they moved back and forth between my classroom and the special needs program so ....

Research Journal: I wonder how our stories of inclusion and exclusion and our experiences of working with students with special needs in pull-out and in-class programs define the boundaries and either limit or enrich our understanding of middle space. Is this a place where we encounter some of the dilemmas I have spoken about? I want to explore stories of who gets included or excluded in the middle space as it seems to be a recurring theme.

*Lisa's Reflection: When I began teaching, resource assistance was organized around a "pull out" program. The teacher in that school was an experienced, efficient, business-like woman who did a lot of drills with the students. I often felt that I was sending the children to her for an injection, an analogy that reflects the pain of this experience for both myself and the children as well as the idea that this experience would cure them. Unfortunately, this is a story I now look back on with more discomfort than I was feeling at the time.*

*Then, in my eighth year of teaching, I was able to work with a flexible resource teacher who came into my classroom context to plan programs for students with special needs. I love to reflect on the story of one little boy who began the year with such a serious problem that he had to have a room of his own but who was gradually able to develop relationships with the students in his assigned classroom. We were able to create a middle space for and with him. This middle space moved with him as he moved back and forth between his own room and the classroom.*

### .... A bridge

L. *As a beginning teacher, I enjoyed the resource room teacher's dry sense of humour and our association soon developed into a friendship. In matters of teaching I thought she knew best, because after all, she had more experience than I did. She gave me lots of stuff, teacher stuff, that a first year teacher just has to have and she introduced me to computers in 1980 when* *computers were still unheard of in most places. I loved having a computer in my room and was thankful that she had arranged for this to happen. But despite our friendship and my respect for her, I struggled in sending my students away for even a small portion of the day. I didn't know who should go for resource room help or how one decided who to send so I relied on the resource room teacher to make the decision for me. I also had difficulty remembering to send the students to the resource room for this thirty minute class, so they often ended up being late. Then when I did send them, I always felt sorry for what they were missing in our room. It was like being absent, you can't get it back. The stories are already told. The laughter puffed away. The relationships taken to different places. My doubts and dilemmas continued for seven years.*

*In my eighth year of teaching, we had a resource room teacher who wanted to work with teachers and students in their regular classrooms. This was new to the teachers in my school and many resisted this change but I loved it. Having another adult in my room was wonderful. This woman who was flexible, relaxed and caring came in and helped the teachers' aides set up specific programs based on what the students needed and on what we were doing in our classroom. Although I felt like I had a revolving door in my classroom with all of the adults coming and going, I was much more comfortable than I had been when I had to send the children out.*

*During this year, I also had a full time aide who worked with a really disturbed little boy. Even though he was assigned to my class, for the first few weeks he had to spend much of his time in his own room because his anger made it unsafe for him to be around other students. He began to build connections with us by coming into our room for a story once in awhile. Students from my room would also take turns spending time with him in his private space. But by March he was in our room most of the time. His aide could work with all of the children and if he needed to have time away from the group, he would go quietly back to his room. Although he wasn't with us physically at all times, I never felt that he was excluded.*

Transcripts: (pp. 358 - 360)
D. But even if students are assigned to our classrooms, I am concerned that some of the things we ask them to do might exclude them from living in the middle space. I don't think just including all students ensures there will be a middle space for them. For example, expecting someone who is a poor reader to read out loud in front of the class every day is not showing respect for that child. But then again, while it is not respectful of children to put them in an uncomfortable or humiliating position by asking them to do something they are incapable of doing, neither is it respectful to deny anyone the opportunity to participate just because they are unable to participate in the way we have determined is acceptable. Being sensitive to each student is included in the notion of respect, and both sensitivity and respect are necessary to create a middle space.

Research Journal: It seems that we think respecting children's rights to both do or not do something is important. At the same time, it is important to create the kind of space that will encourage students to take risks and which will maintain respect for them even if they have failed to do something they have tried to do. The idea of choice also seems to be part of this space and is something which should be possible for both those who find the task difficult or easy. For example, I shouldn't be forced to read out loud if I can not do it, but on the other hand, I should not be forced to read out loud just because I am a good reader.

L. I think who it is who is asking them to do something and what sort of a setting this is occurring in makes a difference. I don't know Christopher, but maybe you can ask him to read out loud or whatever else it is he has a really hard time doing because it is okay for him to take this risk in the context of your classroom.
M. If your classroom provides a supportive environment even poor readers will be able to take their turn reading because other students will give them praise for both their effort and their improvement. My students are always giving each other encouragement. Just the other day, they said, "Way to go, Sheldon. You only had trouble in two spots and you read the word discovery!" But that kind of support does not just happen on the first day of school. That happens after you have supported everyone individually at some point so they know what it feels like to be supported and to be supportive.
L. Because your classroom provides them the life-line they need to go out and jump off. (exactly)

Research Journal: Lisa's and Margaret's observations highlight the part our relationships with our students and the nurturing interactions that take place play in creating the middle space. As teachers, the same act on our part may enhance the middle space for one child and diminish it for another. There is no recipe for creating the middle space. It is constructed and reconstructed through our ongoing interactions and relationships and may change for a particular student as other factors come into play. Middle space is a supportive space which is created over time as teachers and students form relationships and develop the embodied knowledge of what it means to be supported so they can be supportive of others in this space.

However, even when we are convinced that the middle space is a supportive and responsive space, how we respond to the children in our classrooms is not always determined without personal or professional struggle. We face dilemmas as external expectations and even personal biases cause us to question our practice and to ask if we are being professionally responsible and doing the right thing for the student when our responses are based on the needs of the individual student rather directed toward systemic goals.

### .... His hand in mine: The ties that bind

Transcripts: (pp. 274 - 275)
L. One of my students was having a rough time last week. He is a really high energy kid. Usually he's fairly good at directing his energy productively but the last couple of weeks he has not been focused. So, tired of his behaviour, I finally left my student teacher with the class and took him into another room just to talk. I just said, "Mike, what's wrong? There's something going on here, what's wrong?" And he said, "Well I'm just not myself. I know it. I'm just not myself. I haven't had a lot of sleep lately and hockey is over. Hockey ended two weeks ago and baseball doesn't start for another week." And I thought that explains a lot. He's such a physically active boy, that if he doesn't have an acceptable place to use this excess energy up it comes out in unacceptable ways. He said, "All my other teacher did was yell at me. She'd never listen to me. I'm really glad that you listen to me. I feel like I can be myself."
D. As you were telling this story, I was thinking that that the middle space has to make room for our conversations. It has to have democratic principles operating in it. It can not be a one way street. I don't think this is just something that I as an adult hold as an abstract belief, but something that is felt and which impacts on the experience of the children as well, something they would notice.
K. I definitely think this is something we could get access to by remembering our own childhoods. If we remember our own stories....

Transcripts: (pp. 345 - 351)
M. Remember the little boy in my room, Christopher, who I talk about incessantly? (Yes) I want to tell you another story about him.

M. *Christopher came to school yesterday and said, "I'm not going to be here this afternoon. I'm going to the doctor. But I'm not sick. I'm going to a doctor to talk about my worries and about what makes me so angry all of the time." Interestingly enough, this morning he wrote a letter to his dog on the computer. It said:*

*Dear Cody,*
*I love you. I will always love you because you are my dog.*
*You are brown and white and belong to me and I will never*
*sell you.*

*Christopher had two other dogs but when his parents split up they decided to give the dogs to his grandma who lived on a farm. They told him he could visit them all the time but the grandmother sold them. After he shared his writing with me, I said to him, "This is a wonderful piece of writing. How about if you photocopy it and give one copy to your mom and one to your dad." I thought if they read this, they'll know they shouldn't do anything with their other dog. That they should let him keep it. (mmmhmm). You belong to me and I will never sell you. (oh) (What a message!) So then he asked me just before he went home, "Mrs. Allen would you like a photocopy of this?" And I said "I'd love it." And he slips his hand into mine - all these things he doesn't do, he slips his hand into mine and he's sort of walking along, walking along. And he says, "Mrs. Allen." And I said, "Yes, Christopher." He said, "Nothing." I said, "Christopher, it's really nice of you to offer me a piece of your writing. How did you know that I would like it?" And he said, "Because it's the first piece of writing that I ever wrote on the computer and it's the first piece of writing about loving." . . . . (my) Honest to God. I just sat there and wondered what am I supposed do now? (yes) What am I supposed to say?*

L. I love you too.

## .... Lifelines in the middle space

M. Yes, but that's the easy part. I am having conflicting feelings about whether to keep Christopher with me for another year. (pause) I don't know what to do. You don't know him personally but you've heard my stories. I know this is nothing about middle space. Do you want me to stop. . . .
(No, keep going.) (It sounds like middle space to me.) (It sounds like it is to me too, so keep talking.)
M. I honestly don't know what to do. I've asked people on our staff but they've all said I shouldn't take him again next year. I have the chance of taking him with me and part of me feels very strongly that I should because he's really bonded to me deeply and I've been the one thing for him this whole year that hasn't changed. Now his mom is talking about moving houses so that's going to change too. I'll be taking the rest of my grade two's with me, and he's so smart he'll think that he's the only one I didn't want. I think that's just one knock too many. But on the other hand, if he went to another teacher, he would probably have the chance of bonding with two adults. . . .
L. It's too soon. Maybe by grade four he'll be ready to bond with somebody

else.
M. Yes, you think so?
L. I don't know. I don't even know him, but it just, it just sounds too soon. He's only six.
M. And he seems like a little old man in a little boy's body (yes) You think so? (yes) But he's really difficult to deal with.
L. Of course. Another consideration is your sanity and what's good for the other kids too.
M. But you see, that's another factor. He's liked and respected in our room right now. As it is, there's going to be an influx of ten other kids he'll have to adjust to, but he'll still have his base (there'll still be a core). But me putting him into another new room . . . . I'm sorry. The way I'm painting the picture it is obvious I want to keep him. I'm giving all these it's going to be alright for both of us scenarios but in reality, it's tough! This year there have been times when I've wanted anybody to take him for a little while because I thought I would go crazy. But the only way this would work for Christopher would be if the teacher really liked him and he got to go to another class to visit not as a punishment! I think I could do that for his next teacher. I could be the teacher who could have Christopher come to visit when his next teacher needed a break because he would not feel like it was a punishment to come to my room. If he bonded with someone else, he could still spend a lot of time with me. But that takes me full circle because it's based on the premise that he will bond with another teacher and I'm not sure he will.
L. Why don't you go the other way? Keep him another year and have him start bonding with somebody else by spending time with the teacher that he will have after next year (yes) because it's probably going to take months. . . . How long did it take you and he to connect?
M. This is the first time he's reached his hand into mine.
L. Yes. It took eight months. And it's probably going to take that long again, if not longer after he's gone through another change in the summer, to connect with another adult. And he may never.

Research Journal: This story about Christopher and the next one about Kyle lead us to look at middle space as not only positioned within one teacher's classroom but as a space that needs to surround the child as that child moves out of one physical space and into the next. In trying to understand this and make some connections it seems we need to address the need for continuity in our relationships with students and in their relationships with each other.

L. Next year our grade six students move into the junior high of seven hundred kids. They will have eight or nine teachers in a day. It's quite a tough school and it's a very full school. It's packed. I want to go over to the junior high with Kyle. (mmmhmm) And I think I'm going to. I want to go over there and find

someone to care for him because if there is no one there he can connect with, he will be lost. He needs someone to care for him next year. Just one person. It doesn't even need to be anyone who is teaching him, but he needs one person who he will feel connected to and who will be committed to watching over him and talking with him. (overlapping talk)
M. Which school is he going to?
L. It's right across the street......(soft comments) but I don't know what he is going to do. He's going to get beat up there. He won't make it if there is no one to support him.
A. Are his social problems caused by his physical appearance?
L. Not really.
K. Is he just an odd duck?
L. He is an odd duck.
K. I meant that in a nice way. (yes) (soft comments I can't hear)
L. If he could survive the next six years, I think he might be okay. I don't think his differences will always be as detrimental to his acceptance as they are right now. But I don't know if he will, and I think grade seven is going to be a horrific experience for him. I don't think he has a chance unless he either goes to a really small school where they couldn't send him to eight or nine teachers because there weren't that many, or he has one person who is responsible to see that his lifelines are properly connected!
K. It is surprising how resilient kids are but I can't help agreeing with Lisa. Students like Christopher and Kyle need to be able to build connections but this takes a lot of time and it can't be done in an impersonal crowd of people. I also agree with Lisa that Christopher needs to have the opportunity to maintain his stability for awhile and then as Lisa said, maybe he could be weaned away and encouraged to develop relationships with other people too.
L. His summer will be quite different if he knows he's coming back to you. Whatever traumatic happens, and it likely will, he'll at least know he is going to be with you in September.
M. His mom doesn't like him. That's the big problem.
A. That's incredible. (ya)
D. How can your mom not like you?
A. Yes, that's what I was thinking.
M. She's really, really frustrated with him. It's just amazing watching the two of them. Did I tell you I had to ask her to leave the classroom?

M. *Christopher's mom comes every week or every other week and brings his little sister. His little sister is going down the same road that Christopher is on. You can almost touch the tension when they're both in the room together. It causes a real dilemma for me because she doesn't have very good management skills and she doesn't really like children but I think she could benefit from seeing how other adults relate to Christopher. However, she's constantly haranguing Christopher and the other students don't want to work with her.*

*Christopher has been feeling really good about his writing. He's showing it to all kinds of people. But when his mom comes in she is always looking over his shoulder criticizing his work. "Your "f" isn't touching the bottom of the line, your "t" isn't straight enough. You forgot your period. Your "s" is backwards." By the end of this, he's up on his desk. If he didn't have any other problems maybe I'd work on desk sitting behaviour, (overlapping conversation) but I am actually working on getting him to smile so I don't care how he sits in his desk which causes his mom to say, "Look at everyone else. Everyone else is sitting." Finally Christopher shouted "leave me alone" and then he crawled under his desk and screamed so hard that this mother turned beet red and walked out of the classroom.*

*I went over to Christopher after he had come back out from under his desk and said, "Christopher, if you can't keep your behaviour under control when your mom is here, I'll have to ask your mom to leave." But five minutes after she had re-entered the room, he was not only under his desk, he was huddled under mine shouting, "No, no, no, no." So I went over to her and said I've already told Christopher that if he can't keep his behaviour under control when you're in here I would have to ask you to leave, so I'm asking you to leave. She was furious. I said it's not a reflection on you but I need you to go. She finally left. When she came to pick him up at noon she said, "Hi honey, did you have a good morning?"*

Research Journal: In my proposal I expressed concern that students are like captives in our classrooms. They are not free to go home in the middle of the morning like Stephen could. This story gives us another way to look at the middle space we create in our classrooms since, for Christopher, the school is in some ways a refuge from his home life. His private or personal life is not necessarily something he wants to intrude into the world of school, at least not in the person of his mother. Her presence destroys the middle space Margaret is attempting to create for him. But creating this middle space is not as simple as keeping his mother away, because in his story of his dog he shows he also has the need to bring his private stories to the public world of school. For Christopher, a middle space at school might be a place that would allow him to control both what was allowed in the conversation and when the world of home would be welcome in the world of school.

*Lisa's Reflections: I think that school can be a private world too. Perhaps it's Christopher's private world. That's what I missed about my teaching this year. Because of the open area, it was always so public that relationships tended to stay on the surface. I think it's risky to be "private" because more is on the line.*

## Part IV.
## TALES TOLD OUT OF SCHOOL

### .... Stories from behind the veil

Reflective Turn: There are some stories we do not feel safe enough to tell in our schools. These stories do not usually appear in public documents. As teachers, we live within a professional code of conduct which regulates our speech and funnels our grievances through the proper channels. But rather than ensuring that professional communication between colleagues of equal status will occur in a respectful and civilized manner, this code of conduct often positions teachers in silence and disconnectedness because, in many cases, those to whom they need to engage in dialogue with are not their equals but persons in positions of authority in their schools. In many cases, they are also men. As women educators, we live within a cultural story which governs our conduct and which regulates our speech, in a context which positions us hierarchically as subordinate, as other. In some schools the administrators are not only men, and therefore in a dominant position, they are men who abuse the power of their positions to dominate and control the women and children who are under them. As women, our language, the language of our culture through which we construct our being and through which our being is constructed, positions us in a certain way in our world, in our work and in our relationships. Davies (1992) argues that,

> The concept of positioning is central to an understanding of the way in which people are constituted through and in the terms of existing discourses (Davies and Harre, 1990). Even where the process of positioning has been understood and where the interactants do not wish to position each other in terms of their sex, that they do so is almost inevitable (p. 54)).

Many of these administrators operate from a set of assumptions about relationships, knowledge and schooling which are so antithetical to those held by the female teachers in their schools, that feelings of hopelessness and despair or the desire to flee permeate these tales which have been told out of school.

These stories told behind the veil[1], speak of personal, social/cultural and systemically situated disrespect for female teachers and students. They also speak to the lack of respect their tellers have experienced, not just as professionals but as human beings, and of a lack of middle space for professional practice, communication and growth. However, and this point must not go without notice, these storytellers are less concerned with the indignities they have suffered than they are with those suffered by their students. They are less concerned with their subordinate positions than they are about the effect this inequity will have on their ability to create a middle space for the students in their classrooms. And if it were not for these students, they might have chosen to remain forever silent behind the veil.

Furthermore, and even more telling perhaps, they would rather be allowed to remain silent for they are conditioned by the society they live in to suppress their feelings of anger and outrage. When, in moments of sudden clarity they tried to speak, of the unspeakable, they suffered the reproach of their colleagues as well as their administrators. They have been socialized to normalize the abnormal (Estes, 1991), even when it is to their own and their children's detriment, in order to uphold the status quo, the position, power and privilege of the white male (Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Minnich, 1990). They do not like telling these stories and in order to do so, they must struggle not only against an external oppressor, who robs them and their students of middle space, but against themselves and the internalized oppressor who bids them to be good.

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[1] Davies, in her chapter, "Women's Subjectivity and Feminist Stories," (Ellis, C., & Flaherty, M. G. editors, 1992) reflects on the "the nature of women's subjectivity and the relation of that subjectivity to lived and told stories"; and drawing on the work of feminist poststructuralist writers, who have "argued for a multiple wholeness for women that incorporates both sides of the current oppositional and hierarchical dualisms through which femininity and masculinity are currently constructed", looks at "ways in which feminist subjectivity is impeded or enhanced through the taking up of particular story lines as one's own" (p.53). Further to this, she looks at the "discursive category female/woman and the experience of being discursively constituted as one who belongs in that category" and who then so positioned takes up "as one's own those discourses through which one is constituted as female" (p.54). However, since these discourses are multiple and contradictory, women's knowing and constituting of themselves is also contradictory. While this contradictory subjectivity can be debilitating, since this apparently contradictory self (defined and positioned thus by the dominant discourse) is then marked as irrational or incomprehensible, it can also allow women to gain a clearer comprehension of themselves as they resist the dualism of the discourse and embrace the multiplicity of their lives. "Poststructuralist theory thus opens up the possibility of seeing the self as continually constituted through multiple and contradictory discourse that one takes up as one's own in becoming a speaking subject" (p.57).

Unfortunately, these storytellers have not only been separated from their voices in the situations they encountered as teachers in various schools, but in these stories[2] which are embedded within the larger research story they must also be stripped of their personal identities as they tell their stories out of school. The middle space which invited their voices and which was constructed out of their stories, is still very small. Even with assurances of anonymity and promises of complete control over the final research story there were many instances when I was asked to turn off the tape recorder or not type the transcripts.

### .... Noses to the wall

(W's story:[3] )

Transcripts: (pp. 352 - 354)

*Although I was quite calm about the whole thing when I spoke to the vice-principal, I was just steaming inside. To see one of my little people with his face pressed up against the wall in the office, absolutely humiliated, was more than I could stand. But speaking to this man obviously didn't help because it wasn't long until I saw this same child at the wall again.*

V. It's working well?
W. Yes, it's really working well isn't it, so we'll do it again.

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[2] These stories did not appear all at one time in the transcripts, nor were they solicited. They burst forth in the midst of other conversations as if they had a life and an energy of their own. The participants' names will not be used in this section of the research story because the middle space, which allows us to bring the personal and the private into the public realm, does not extend into the world outside our group. However, telling these stories in the middle space of our collaborative storytelling group and allowing others to share them in this public research story might be the first professional step we can take toward naming the abnormal and identifying it as something we do not condone, as something we do not want to just live with! Telling these stories might be the first political step we can take toward creating a middle space in the world outside of our research group and outside of our own classrooms.

[3] The initials which identified us by name, have now been changed to V, W, X, Y and Z to protect the participants. Where necessary to protect anonymity, even these are not included. Names of places and people, and other identifying features have been changed to ensure anonymity. In some cases where a reflection could be traced to a group member a blank _ replaces a name.

*Realizing that communicating my feelings to the vice-principal was not going to stop this practice, I decided to speak directly to the principal. But he missed the point of what I was trying to say and said he thought it was the school secretary who had stood them there, as if that could justify what had happened! So the third time I came upon this boy with his nose to the wall, I just lost my cool. I was past caring about what the administrators would think of my interference after three episodes of this. I went right over to the students who were standing at the wall and I took my little guy from that spot. I walked with him down the hall and talked to him about what had happened to him. I thought, I really don't care whether this is going against school policy or against what the administrators think is right. I just talked to this little person about the situation and was quite honest in terms of what I felt and thought of this punishment. That's it. That's all I can do. But if they try doing it again, I think I'll probably call the parents up. What else can I do? Three times and they still don't get it.*

Y. What always amazes me is (putting the horror of being pinned up against the wall aside for now) if it didn't work the first time wouldn't someone get the idea that it wasn't very effective, just in a pragmatic way? (overlapping talk) It's like screaming at your kids, it isn't long before they just don't hear you.
V. And I don't imagine that this would have been an isolated incident. You must have felt that anger constantly at the lack of respect shown for children.
W. I didn't really feel that children were appreciated in that particular school.
V. Well that's exactly how it is where I am. It's like the children get in the way of what we want to be and do as a school. (a lot of overlapping talk, and hysterical laughter)
V. Yes, if it weren't for those darn kids we'd have such a clean playground and (laughter)....
Z. my philosophy would shine so brightly (laughter)....
Y. and I'd be such a good teacher (laughter)....

### .... Laughter through the tears

Research Journal: If this is not funny, why are we laughing? Are we laughing because while it sounds so absurd when we hear another teacher telling this story, we know from our own experiences it is unfortunately repeated in too many places. Maybe, our laughing is not that far from our crying. Maybe we need to reflect on the emotion that accompanies these tales.

V. And I always feel when someone reprimands my students that I may as well just stand right beside them (yes) and say, "Go ahead and scream at me too because that's how badly I feel when you're screaming at one of my students!"

(yes) "Sure, okay, I'll go stand beside him at the wall with my nose against it too!" (hysterical laughter and overlapping talk)
Y. "Send him back and I'll take the punishment!" (exactly) (more hysterical laughter and overlapping talk)
W. "Excuse me, you can leave now. (hysterics and incoherent talk) I'll substitute today...."
V. Don't all good mothers do that? You want to take the pain for your child. (laughter) (No transcription possible as we roll on the floor with shrieks of laughter)

Reflective Turn: As I read through these transcripts yet again, I wonder what role emotion plays in our understanding. I reflect once more on its place in our research story. Remembering a chapter written by Alison Jaggar (1989), "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology", I stop my own writing to reread it. I am not surprised she begins her writing with the remark "Within the western philosophical tradition, emotions usually have been considered as potentially or actually subversive of knowledge" (p. 145), as I have just been questioning the efficacy of letting anyone outside our storytelling group know about our "shrieks of laughter" for fear they might not consider what we are doing as real research. Nor am I surprised at Jaggar's presentation of the dichotomous framework upon which reason (public) and emotion (private) have been split asunder, as it is this paradigm which informs so much of my own educational experience and underlies my need to create a middle space. I am, however, interested in thinking about her suggestion that "emotions may be helpful and even necessary rather than inimical to the construction of knowledge" (p. 146) and in exploring her idea that emotions are socially constructed and reconstructed in our life experiences and in our reflections. But perhaps, I am most intrigued by what she has called "out-law emotions", those socially unacceptable emotions experienced by "subordinated individuals who pay a disproportionately high price for maintaining the status quo" (p. 160) because of the connections I see between these emotions and those we are experiencing toward many of the situations in our schools, between these emotions and tales told out of school.

Jaggar's examination of the social construction and reconstruction of emotion and the connections she makes between our emotions, what we value, and hence what we choose to select for observation and interpretation are also relevant to our understanding of the construction of knowledge as it challenges the myth of dispassionate investigation which underlies scientific reasoning. Within the positivist tradition, emotion is only allowed to play a role in generating a hypothesis. The investigation itself however, must be uncontaminated by subjective values and emotions. "The core of this logic (of justification) is replicability, a criterion believed capable of eliminating or cancelling out what are conceptualized as emotional as well as evaluative biases on the part of individual investigators" (p. 155). However, if, as Jaggar argues, science can not eliminate generally accepted social values from the research and can only with hindsight identify prevailing values which shaped the science of the past; it may be "necessary to rethink the relation between knowledge and emotion and construct conceptual models that demonstrate the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relation between reason and emotion" (pp. 156 - 157). But restorying the relationship between reason and emotion, between public and private, is not an easy matter as the current dichotomous relationship is implicitly embedded in the dominant discourse and hierarchical structure of society. In the western tradition, reason has been ascribed to the dominant group (man, the "dispassionate investigator") and emotion to the subordinate groups (woman, the emotional, irrational and easily discredited). "The epistemic authority of the dominant groups then justifies their political authority" (p. 158).

However Jaggar asserts, while emotional responses are rooted implicitly in dominant values and therefore ensure the perpetuation of society, "people do not always experience the conventionally acceptable emotions...in other words, the hegemony that our society exercises over people's emotional constitution is not total" (p. 160). These unconventional emotional responses, or outlaw emotions, are necessary to develop a critical perspective and to motivate critical research. "They may provide the first indications that something is wrong with the way alleged facts have been constructed, with accepted understandings of how things are"... and encourage us to "challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo" (p. 161). Jaggar contends that we have reason to trust these emotions in women and other subordinated groups who because of their position in the hierarchy have a will to establish a society where all will thrive. While alerting us to the importance of attending to, rather than ignoring or suppressing these emotions in the construction of knowledge, she cautions that these emotions must also be subject to reinterpretation in a "feedback loop between our emotional constitution and our theorizing" (p. 163).

X. I can still remember the one time in my life when I had to stand in the corner, how horrible it felt. I was in grade one. It happened because I couldn't understand the concept of container. (What? You can't be serious!) I can remember it so clearly. We were supposed to cut pictures out of magazines of different kinds of containers and glue them on a paper. I don't know why, but I couldn't understand it. It seems like such a simple concept now but it wasn't then, so I had to stand in the corner.
Y. And did that help you learn?
X. Yes, it really helped me learn a lot. It helped me learn the humiliation of standing there and it helped me learn who was the boss, who had power and authority.
Y. .... And injustice. . . .the rage of injustice.

Research Journal: For me, this conversation highlights the significance of our relationships with our students in the creation of a middle space and speaks to our understanding that middle space can not exist within an authoritarian and hierarchical structure meant to teach children who is the boss. It also speaks to the frustrations and dilemmas we confront when the school itself is not a middle space for either the teachers or the students.

### .... To know your place

V. If I'm feeling that I'm not respected as a teacher then what is going to happen in my classroom? It's very definitely a hierarchy. The big thing in our school now is our plans. They want the plans done in a certain way and they want them turned in. We spent a whole day last week making up the Language Learning plans in a specified way that allowed no room for individual preferences. I was so frustrated by this attempt to keep me and the students out of the construction of curriculum that I wanted to fight back. I felt like I had been cornered and that my middle space was non-existent. I wanted to say to the principal, where are your plans? I want to see your plans. You justify to me what you're doing. Right now, I am the only one who is being held responsible and accountable. I have to justify what I do every single day to you. Why don't you justify to me what you're doing . You're supposed to be here for me and the students! (Yes) But in our school it's turned the other way around and what the teachers and students need is not even considered. I guess I'm just so tired of the lack of respect and the condescending way the teachers are treated all the time. I don't know. Maybe, they treat us that way because it's how they're treated when they go to their principals' meetings.

Reflective Turn: Gaskell, McLaren & Novogrodsky, in *Claiming an education: Feminism and Canadian schools* (1989), stated "the contradictions of people working in unequal hierarchies of power will speak louder than the equality they might try to achieve for others" and argued that if we want to have equal opportunity for students in our schools, "we have to empower women as educators and caretakers" (p. 63). Although not discounting the role played by affirmative action, they stress equality will not be achieved unless teachers' work is valued as highly as that done by administrators and superintendents and they are given a "say about how things are done" (p. 64). However, rather than just replacing one group of managers with another, they advocate our attention not be focused only on who has the power, but on what kind of power is being exercised. They suggest we question the hierarchy of power which rests on the assumption "that those at the top are much more capable of formulating policy and making decisions than those at the bottom" and "denies the possibility of broadly-based consultations taking place" (p.73); and look at "the devaluation of the work of the teacher (who is more often than not a woman) in relation to that of an administrator (more often than not a man)" (p. 75) since these attitudes leave teachers no voice in the way their work is organized and carried out.

W. That may very well be true, but when I look at our vice-principal, I realize that it's not just the way he's treated in the educational hierarchy but also a reflection of his home life and of society where certain attitudes towards women are perpetuated. I wonder where he learned to treat women in such a disrespectful way. He would actually yell at women staff members as they were walking down the hall. He'd say STOP! (Not to the teachers?) Yes, to the women, to the women, not to the men.

*X's reflection: This is incredible. Incredibly depressing. It takes us back to* *respect for others again.*

Reflective Turn: In "Interrupting Patriarchy: Politics, Resistance and Transformation in the Feminist Classroom," Magda Lewis (1992) explores images of domination and intimidation in our schools and in our society. "I am haunted by the image of young women--not unlike the women I teach--lined up against the wall..." (p. 168) Presenting this image of the massacre of fourteen young women at the Universite de Montreal as a reflection of "infinitely receding images of male power transformed into violence", Lewis questions how we can develop critical perspectives which will enable us to identify and "locate school practices as part of the larger social context within which schools exist" (p. 169) and "to see how social practices are organized to support certain interests" (p. 168). In her class, students examined cultural practices to determine how they reflected the larger social context and to question and challenge many of the conditions and practices they had previously accepted as given.

However, Lewis is aware that any critique of patriarchy is not without "threat to women's survival and livelihood" (p. 173). This threat is from without and within as women's internalized roles place them at conflict with themselves and make it difficult for them to move beyond nurturing and protecting even those to whom they are subordinated. Nevertheless, she sees attempts at consciousness raising, where women come together and share personal stories, as an effective practice for transformation of our individual lives and collective social experience. It is because of the transformative potential of such collaborative storytelling and self-reflexivity that, "The dominant forms of discourse are aimed hegemonically at preventing women from engaging in discussions that lead toward consciousness raising; the threat of social sanctions defuses the vitality of storytelling" (p. 177). Because of this threat, Lewis proposes "women need space and safety so that they are free to speak in order to better understand and act against the violations they have experienced in a social/cultural setting that subordinates them in hurtful and violent ways" (p. 186).

W. I just refused to be treated that way, so when he yelled at me the first time I kept on walking, pretending I hadn't heard him or believed he could possibly be addressing me in such a demeaning manner. Later on I saw him with another woman in the office saying, "You were late for our meeting. I am your superior and you will not be late for a meeting." (loud gasps) And she was cowering. I couldn't believe the way this man thought he could get away with treating women, but through our silence and our unwillingness to bring this matter into the open, we were actually the accomplices who reinforced this behaviour.

_. But what can you do? For instance, how can I stand up and say, "Who are you to say what I should do when my kids have elastic bands?" I didn't stand up to him. I'm not going to. What do you do? What do you say? You just leave....

Z. You leave, or you say something and then you're "one of those".

V. Or you're one of those. The other day, I was wondering why these two men were our administrators when out of thirty-five of us, thirty-two were women. (That's a familiar story, thirty women with two men running the show).

X. So often in an elementary school....

_. He acts like he's got this brood or (harem). When he reprimanded me about the elastic bands, I wanted to say something. I wanted to point out that he had not been teaching for a long time, that he did not understand this incident from a classroom teacher's perspective, that he was not living in relationship to the students and that his concerns were motivated by authoritarianism rather than caring. But what can you say? What can you say?

X. I guess I was lucky to have two administrators (men) who were so timid that they stayed in the office doing managerial tasks instead of managing the teachers and the students! (Yes! - overlapping conversation - lots of it! ).

*At the request of the participants the conversation from this point until the end of the meeting is not transcribed.*

### .... Maybe this is a gender issue

Transcripts: (pp. 263 - 268)

V. I tend to look at things more now as gender issues than I would have at one time. Just looking at the structure of our staff meetings, how our school is structured and how we're spoken down to. Our administrator is like an authoritarian father speaking to his children who he needs to keep under control, so that we in turn will keep the students under control. All this top down stuff makes it very apparent that we are not living in a democracy.

Z. Talk about that some more....

V. Well there are two men in charge and they value such different kinds of things from those I value. From my perspective, they value the lower level kinds of things....

Z. The easily measured and controlled?
V. The easily measurable, the easily correctable. They want respect for their authority, but they do not value respect for others as a necessary part of living together.
Y. That may not necessarily be a gender issue though. It might be the situation that you are in.
V. But I think in this case it is a gender issue. Our principal was a superintendent for several years. He is in a management career. (yes) He would never dream of teaching, he considered that a job for women.

*X's Reflection: Isn't that the weirdest thing for a person in a school-related career? I wonder what his middle space is like. Or is he really a flat, 2-D man?*

W. So are you saying it's a gender issue because of the way he talks to you, like a father to the teachers, that he is condescending?
V. Extremely condescending. I hope he doesn't want to come in and do an evaluation of me because I don't think I'd let him. I'm at the point where I'm ready to say fire me. I will neither accept nor sign any evaluation he chooses to do of me because I do not respect his view of teaching or his understanding of the role of the teacher. He has not taught for so many years that he is out of touch with what teaching is and what it feels like. I say that because he wouldn't be talking to us in the way he is if he were in touch with the classroom world.
W. I agree with you that maybe this is a gender issue. I certainly was in a school where the principal and vice-principal had a very poor attitude toward women as well. [ W. asked that her subsequent comments including those about the experiences of three student teachers, two female and one male, not be transcribed but ended her story by observing that] ......here we have a situation where women are doing the same thing to other women....
Z. I do not think that for us to identify something as a gender issue it necessarily has to be men who are exercising power over women. In our society, I think many women have internalized the patriarchal model to the extent that they often perpetuate it on other women as effectively as men do (some of them).
V. And he (the male student teacher in W's unwritten story) will likely end up in administration if he continues.
W. Oh, I have no doubt. (laughter) He was so confident whereas the two female student teachers were not. It was as though he'd walked into a role that he'd been assigned to all his life.
Z. Well, if you think about it, a lot of it has been decided before we got there and before he got there.... (there you go).
W. But I was surprised that in this instance it was three experienced women teachers who were consciously or unconsciously putting this much younger and inexperienced male teacher into that exalted position, while they were reinforcing the "know your place" mentality in the two female student teachers.

Reflective Turn: This sounds very similar to what Craig (1992) observed in her research with two beginning teachers. The career pathway seemed to open up in front of the male teacher as quickly as it closed down in front of the female.

V. I guess that shouldn't surprise me, but as a woman I just can't imagine doing that to another woman. But I guess it's often done unconsciously and in such subtle ways that we don't even notice it let alone question it.

Y. I had an interesting experience with two male student teachers in my room. I should have had one of them moved at the end of two weeks because he did not want to learn from me. I've had other experiences with student teachers who have not been comfortable with the way I teach and while I've found it a little amusing because they don't really have the experience to be forming those judgments yet, I still respect their feelings. But this student teacher believed that he was God's gift not only to women, but to the world and definitely to the teaching profession. (laughter) He would do things that were just beyond belief without ever realizing what he had done. An example of this, well here's a story. . . .

*With beginning student teachers, I usually model a lesson before I ask them to teach one along the same lines so they will be more comfortable and won't have to be worried about preparing everything all at once. At this time, I was working with grade threes on a choral reading which was going into our readers' theatre. I know choral reading is not all that difficult but I often find that the students' reading has a sing song rhythm (la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la). which makes it uninteresting so I try to work really hard on changing that. So I modelled a lesson on choral reading. I thought I had done quite well and had explained all of the objectives. The next day, the student teachers were supposed to split the class into two groups and each do a lesson in choral reading.*

*Totally disregarding everything I had said, the hero of our story started off his lesson by having the students clap the beat. (Claps beat) Then he told them to read to that beat. (laughter, okay) So they began to read, na, na, na, na, na, na, until one of the kids told him that they don't read like that because it's boring and they need to use expression. He ignored this input and said he wanted them to read to the beat. Then another child tried to say something too, but he wasn't listening to the kids even though this child went ahead and demonstrated what he meant by reading part of the story with a lot of expression. It was beautiful and you could see the other kids perking up but the student teacher said no I want you to read it to the beat again. He drilled the expressiveness right out of them.*

*Now at this point, I wasn't going to interrupt him so I waited until his lesson was finished before I asked him why he thought the kids had made* *these comments. And he said, oh I don't know, they really weren't paying attention. I said, I think they were paying attention. They were telling you something. Think back, this is what they said. What do you think they were telling you? But he could not get it. So I had to say to him finally, look I'm going to teach this lesson again tomorrow and I'd like you to watch and then we'll talk about the two lessons and see if you can pick up the difference. However, even after this he could not comprehend what I was saying and blamed me for not telling him how to do it. No matter what I said, no matter how I phrased it, it was going to be my fault.*

V. How long was he with you?
Y. Three months.
V. Three long months.
Y. Only Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings though.
Z. Did it get any better?
Y. No, in fact it got worse. (overlapping talk and laughter) He had to keep a reflective journal because this was supposed to be a reflective practitioner course. In his writing to me, he wrote something about one of the children in my room that really concerned me. I had a native boy in my class. The student teacher wrote in his journal: When I look at that boy I really understand why people are frustrated with natives and their home lives. I wrote back and said, That may be what you think, but please don't ever write something like that about a student again. Your prejudice is shining through, and if that is the way you're viewing this child, that is the way you're going to start to treat him too!"

*'s Reflection: This would really upset me too. Most of the students I've ever taught happen to be from the Dene nation and I certainly could never categorize them like that. People are people.*

Research Journal: So if we want to create a middle space where all children are valued, we are saying it must be a moral place and that a teacher in that space must believe that all children should be valued and treated with respect, dignity and equality.

Y. But to get back to the topic of gender issues, the first guy, hunkered over to me one day and said, "So" - you know how these types invade your personal space - "So, how long have you been teaching?" I told him and he said,"I'm not going to teach that long. I think I'm only going to teach around two years and then I think I'm going to go into administration." (Hysterical shrieks!!!) And I thought he probably will too. He probably will and God help me someday I'll be applying to his school for a job. (laughter)
V. That's what our vice-principal did. He taught a couple of years and then he became a vice-principal. He does not have enough experience. Well I'll tell

you another off the record story too . . . . (laughter, over lapping talk, laughter)
D. That's okay I just won't publish my dissertation.
V. Middle space (overlapping talk and laughter) -- just lots and lots of space with no middle....
(Y tries to retrieve the conversation from the hysteria we are collaboratively generating!)

Research Journal: How could we show what the absence of middle space would look like? Would it be infinite space forever filled with silence because it was not a safe place to share our stories; or would it be no space at all, the tape recorder on pause, no lines in the transcripts. . . .

### .... Restorying our experiences: A place for my voice

V. The administrators in our school are working on degrees in Educational Administration. One of them is looking at school culture and the role of the principal in building that culture. (right) He is going around to various schools and following some principals around - all men naturally - in order to find out what school culture is all about. He came in at lunch time today and said, "I'm just learning so much about school culture and about the principal's role in constructing it." Then, to our amazement he said, "Today I ordered you all tee shirts. You're all going to get school tee shirts (laughter) because I went to a school where everyone was happy and they all had (tee shirts) tee shirts, so that's". . . .
W. Listen we were given business cards. That could be the next.
Y. Business cards?
W. Yes.
Y. What do they say on them? (laughter) We're in the business of life?
W. No, your name, that you are a teacher and your address. (laughter)
Y. This is to boost pride, right?
W. Apparently that is culture. A box, we were each given a box of business cards. . . .
Y. And were you ever asked if you wanted them? (no) How about you and your tee shirts? (oh, no) (laughter)
V. And this was just one story, this happens all the time. We are constantly being told what we will do to boost morale and promote school culture. And all the time I'm thinking, you just don't get it. Yes, morale here is low, but you just don't get it.

Transcripts: (pp. 269 - 273)
W. I find it interesting that the low morale hasn't filtered down to the kids....
V. Oh I think that it has.

W. ....because usually if you see an unhappy staff you see unhappy children too.
V. I agree. We've had some vandalism in the last little while which is not the sign of a healthy environment.

Research Journal: As one of our group members was telling the story about tee shirts, I was reminded of something I was trying to understand earlier today. When her principal announced that the staff was getting tee shirts, on V's part at least, there was a feeling that he had missed the point of how a positive school culture is created.

I wonder if something Dewey said might help us understand what this is. At the 1993 American Educational Research Association meeting, a speaker said that on the occasion of Dewey's ninetieth birthday he reminded all those in attendance that democracy begins with conversation. Thinking further about this, I wondered if in our attempts to make space for the child's voice in the public education system we didn't also need to begin with conversation - or storytelling groups like ours.

Conversation and democracy are both built out of respect for others. So in looking at classrooms as places which facilitate moral discourse, I am looking at middle space as discourse that respects all voices and as a place where no one voice is inherently respected or privileged more than another. However, during this conversation, as I listened to the tee shirt story, it occurred to me that this was an example of what I was trying to figure out theoretically. The tee shirts will never create school climate or middle space because the teachers do not feel they had any voice in the decision making and because they are not participants in an ongoing conversation within the school. The absence of their voices in an attempt to create a shared culture is very telling, as is the lack of realization that it is relationships, not tee shirts, which build school climate.

*X's Reflection: Yes, I agree. This is an interesting definition of moral discourse. In a school I was teaching in we had a similar incident happen when we were told (not consulted) that we would be engaging in peer coaching with fellow staff members. How undemocratic, no moral discourse there!*

## .... Issues of power and control

V. When you talk about the moral dimension, which it all is, but specifically when you mention issues of power and control, I get the feeling the administration in our school feels they are losing power and control because things aren't running as smoothly as they did in the past. Because of things like sassy kids, ambiguous curriculum, changing schedules and incidences of vandalism, they think if they let one person "get away with anything" the whole school is going to fall apart. They've lost perspective on the major issues we need to be addressing and they are becoming authoritarian with both staff and students. For instance, at my last school gum chewing was not a major issue. Cigarette smoking out behind the swimming pool was a concern and drugs were considered a serious problem, but the things which seem to be getting so much attention at this particular school were not even mentioned. . . .

A couple of girls from another class ate their lunch in my room the other day. For this, administration suspended them from eating lunch in their own classrooms, told them to eat in the office all the next week and warned them if they did this again they'd be suspended from school.

Y. Because they....

V. . . . . . ate lunch in my room. They weren't supposed to because the school rules state that students are supposed to eat in their own rooms. (mmmhmm) In my last school this would not have become a major issue. These were pretty good kids and their class is not that far away from mine. Lunch is a social time and they didn't cause any problems so I didn't say anything. But to the administration it was a big deal. From their reaction, I got the sense they felt if they didn't look after this, if they didn't put their thumb down and assert their authority over me as well as the students, these girls would think they could do whatever they wanted to do. (There would be anarchy!) But because they have this perspective, based on hierarchical arrangements and authoritarianism, they can not understand that these same petty instances do not also cause me to jump up and down and scream.

Z. When something like this happens in your school, what kind of conversation is there with the students?

V. Oh, there is no conversation. It's strictly one way. You have disobeyed us. You have defied us. You are not following the rules, and if you are not following the rules you are not going to eat lunch here. But saying this, I don't want you to think that I encourage kids to break the school rules. If it's a school rule that you're supposed to eat in your own room, for whatever reason, I'd say next time eat in your own room. And they would. That would be the end of it. So I guess it's probably no wonder why when I walk down the hall people kind of walk around me. In their eyes, I must be doing some things that are just not real cool.

Y. What do you mean people walk around you?

V. Well, I feel really alone. I don't feel like a lot of people say much to me. It's like I'm invisible. Both the administration and most of the staff have very

authoritarian and restrictive relationships with the students. They think this is how they will teach the students to become good citizens.
Z. But is this how you become a good citizen?
V. That is not debated and I guess the lack of conversation bothers me almost as much as the way the students and teachers are treated. There is just an unspoken assumption that this is how a school is run and that this is how students are educated.
Y. I love my daughter's school because they have classroom representatives who meet regularly with the principal to have lunch and to talk about the concerns in their class.
W. You mean really talk, it's not just a puppet thing?
Y. No! They have real conversations and make collaborative decisions. The representative meeting was where they made the decision that the grade six students could chew gum in their classrooms. They all decided that that would be a privilege of grade six. The younger children brought up the concern that they really wanted a place on the playground that was just for them because they felt a little bit scared of the bigger kids.
W. I think that's an excellent idea.
Y. The bigger kids said it made sense to them, so they all agreed to pass this new school rule on to their classes.
V. But it takes time to create a space where students feel they are being listened to and respected. If, in the present school climate, we chose class representatives to meet with the principal, they would be trying to say what the principal wanted them to say. They wouldn't be able to voice their real concerns. They wouldn't be able to address the lack of respect they are given.
Z. Yes, but do you blame them? How many teachers run around doing the same thing, trying to appease or please those in power?
Y. Whereas, my daughter has known this principal since she was in kindergarten. She's in grade five now, so the trust has evolved over five years.

Research Journal: It takes time to create a middle space where voices are not only listened to but where students and teachers are free to speak with their own voices rather than just parroting "the voice of authority" they have often punitively been taught to obey.

*'s Reflection: The importance of time in constructing a middle space is interesting. But unfortunately, time by itself will not create middle space. By the time I left our last school, things had really begun to change. In the space of four years, the school had reached a real zenith, where everyone, students and staff were so positive, and authority was shared quite nicely. Students were really part of it. Then as the staff make-up changed and new teachers who weren't committed to this way of schooling came in, things changed back to a much more traditional mode of schooling. Interestingly, the principal was*

*the same one as in our glory days. The administration didn't make or break the situation in that case since they were more of the "absent father figures'" in the school anyway.*

V. I think it also helps that there are only one hundred and fifty students.
W. Lower numbers certainly do help. You can actually have relationships with children when there are fewer of them.
V. I think that's part of the problem in our school. We've had a big growth spurt and with it the administration seems to have lost a sense of the individual and perceives the students as a group that has to be kept under control. They don't know kid's names or the stories of the individual students unless they're the stories of discipline problems that they've dealt with.
Y. But I don't think that has to be the case. Our previous principal knew the names of each and every one of nearly six hundred students and their brothers and sisters and all their stories.
W. But she didn't lose sight of the individual child, her priority was to create a middle space for each of them.
Y. You're right. She did not do any administrative work during school hours. Whereas, our new principal leaves the school at quarter to four and Fridays at 3:35 and is in no earlier than ten after eight. She doesn't come in on the weekends, so she's doing all her administrative work in school hours. That's time our previous principal spent getting to know kids and teachers. Both administrators are female, so you could say it's not a gender issue but if you look at their underlying philosophies you can see that one is working out of an ethic of care and relationships which has traditionally been defined as feminine and one is working out of the traditional (or male) model of management.
X. Your story reminds me so much of the school that I was in the last two years. There was no way that I'd ever talk to anyone on that staff either.
Y. It's hard when you seem to be the only person who does not fit in a school. I felt that way about an administrator I used to work with. Everyone around thought she was wonderful, but I didn't and it really left me feeling like the odd person out. You don't say anything but you really begin to wonder if your perceptions are wrong (yes) and you start to doubt yourself (you do) and that's very difficult.

Research Journal: Rereading our conversation makes me wonder whether everyone is happy in V's school except V, and to ask if this is the case, will she just have to "learn to fit in" to the existing milieu? Can we dismiss the reality of her experience by saying that it appears to be a non-issue for the majority of teachers in her school? I always wonder, when I seem to be the only person who appears to be thinking or feeling a certain way, what other people are blocking out so that they can continue to exist in a state of equilibrium. I wonder, are the things that bother me really nonexistent or are other people simply ignoring these things because they are not willing to respond to them? I guess in questioning not only the reality that others (at least outwardly) appear to be subscribing to, but also why they might want (consciously or unconsciously) to view things in a particular way, I am also trying to construct an explanation I can live with. But I also know, I am not willing to ignore or keep quiet about things that concern me about schools or education just to maintain the status quo, especially if those things are likely to have a negative impact on the students or teachers and their ability to create and live in the middle space.

Reflective Turn: In speaking of the formation of self, Davies (1992) addresses the issue of being true to oneself through the refusal to play a role that one is uncomfortable with. As teachers, there are some meta-narratives, some stories, some discourses and some situations in which we must refuse to be positioned. As we tell our stories, we may find others who are also on the margins, who are also looking to construct alternative practices.

### .... There's a problem with authority here

Transcripts: (pp. 274 - 283)
W. As a student I got into trouble a lot at school because at home I was taught to think for myself. I was not taught to quietly obey. So there was a real split between home and school for me. I know that I will not ignore things just for the sake of avoiding confrontation and keeping peace. I get into trouble because of that even today as an adult. People have said to me, "Well there's a problem with authority here!" And I think maybe there is. I'd have to be honest about that and say yes there is but I think that as a human being I have the right to think and to have a conversation with someone, not to just be ordered around. So I do have difficulty with someone that will chop me off if I have something that's important to discuss.
Z. And what a thing to say! There's a problem with authority here! Just think about what that's implying. Think of what's behind that remark which is made as if the problem resides in you. Isn't it just too bad that you have a problem accepting someone else having all the power. As if it's a bad thing having problems with that.

V. Oh it is where I am, a big one.
W. There's a book you should read about women and authority. An academic woman is telling about her life, and writes that because she has a working class background she has a double problem with authority.
Z. I never really thought about that before... "She has a problem with authority!"... What a telling comment!
W. A friend of mine, who's a psychologist, was saying the other day that I was sounding a little bit negative, which happens from time to time. (laughter) Anyway, I said something in reply and she said, "Oh, that's a pattern, that's a pattern for you." And I said, "Yes, I have problem with authority!" She's doing a study of women in academia and I suddenly realized that this was going to be one of her themes. She was categorizing. I just sat back and thought, I really get tired of that psychological model. It seems to be so pervasive. I wanted to get outside of her model for a minute. To say, just because I've said this or that does not mean you can pop me into a category. I'm not sexist, but I do think that the way it's been set up makes it appear there's something wrong with me because I question something.
Y. Well, this isn't directly related to education, but that's exactly why I have a terrible time going to church now. I can not go to church (and I was raised in a very religious household) because of that model of authority. If at any point you ever expressed an opinion or a divergent point of view, it was immediately clamped down. (mmmhmm) And I just can't . . . .
W. There's a lot of power in religion. How can you ever gain a sense of efficacy, if you aren't allowed to question anything?
Y. Well, I don't have a problem with my faith. My faith still remains intact, but my ability to worship in a church is another story.
W. Because you'd have to worship in that particular mode.
V. But that's where I'm sitting in school.
Y. Then I feel sorry for you.

### .... Afraid to call it what it is

V. You know when I spoke of this being a gender issue, I feel very much like that hits the nail on the head, no matter how reluctant we are to use that label.
W. But women are afraid to speak up. They are afraid to name something for what it is. I just wrote about that in this story about my experience at school where I was named the "bad little girl" because I spoke up and nobody else wanted to get involved even though they felt the same way.
Y. What was it about?
W. Oh, women on committees, women doing all the work, and the two (men at the top) delegating - but I don't even like to call it delegating because I think delegating is a positive way to structure things. But this was more like we'll manipulate you into being on these particular committees. It didn't even apply as much to me, because I was working on my masters at that particular time

and I didn't have a whole lot of time to be on committees. Anyway, they knew that, but a lot of my women friends were being put on these committees and they were working their tails off! (Am I getting paranoid, or is there more to that expression than we usually notice?) They're really professional women for the most part. They wanted to do good for the school because it was important to them but there was just one thing after the other, and finally it was May but this committee (it was like a puppet committee, and I was one of the people on the committee) was told to put this thing together for Education Week. It was going to be a really big deal. The administrators wanted to have an in-school luncheon which required tons and tons of extra work on top of everything else. So they said just sit down and decide what you're going to do. So we sat down and decided what we were going to do which was about half of what they wanted us to do. So they came back, the principal and vice-principal came back and started yelling. Yelling, if you can believe that. The principal sat there to begin with and said I'm so disappointed in you. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I thought, what? This is something I'd heard in grade one. . . .(yes) (laughter) and I'm a grown woman and I make money (laughter). I couldn't believe it. Then he started going on about how lazy we were and picking on a really close friend of mine who had done an awful lot for the school. I just said I can not believe this and I ended up standing up and walking out. As I walked out I said, "I'm going to lose my temper and I don't want to do that. I will come back and talk to you tomorrow when I've had time to think about this." Everybody else just sat there but later they were saying, "Oh that was really good. I'm so glad you did that!" . . . . But he was a pretty smart man because he knew that if he got us all in the room together no one would say anything. So that's what he did. When I went and spoke to him about this situation we got together as a group but I was the only one who said anything. I walked out of the room and I just felt like, not only have the men had their way here but the women do not support each other [probably also as a result of the men having their way] and I just felt awful. I thought this has happened too many times in my life - where I've spoken up and I've been the one who has suffered. And it showed, in my final evaluation. He couldn't touch my teaching, he knew that, so he did a character assassination. He said I was an instigator in the support staff strike when in fact everybody else acted the same way during the support staff strike. But that was his way of getting back at me and saying, look if you open your mouth you're going to get slapped. So the story goes round that this woman is difficult to deal with. I thought I was being assertive but it was perceived as being aggressive. (yes)
Y. Yes assertive, but also honest and one of the things about the teaching profession is that it is not particularly honest. People do not talk. If I were an administrator, I would far rather have somebody say to me look I don't want to do this then to have somebody say sure I'll do this when behind my back they're saying . . . .

*X's Reflection:* *Is this because there is no space for honesty? It's agree with* *me or take a hike as in W's story. Yes, I've experienced this. The talk takes place on the fringes, behind backs, on the margins (as in the mainstream discussion earlier.) Trouble is, too often this is not positive talk - trying to make changes for the better. Instead it's negative - tearing down someone or something and it's deadening to the school's already hurting morale.*

W. This was going on all the time and everyone was extremely unhappy and very, very tired.
Z. Speaking about honesty, I was in another conversation this week and we were talking about schools wanting students to be critical thinkers. And we were saying, "NO", (no they don't) neither society nor school wants or welcomes critical thinkers. They don't know what to do with them. They just say it because it sounds good, but as soon as someone questions the authorities we can see how popular critical thinkers really are!
Y. But you know why? Critical thinking students are ones who question what you ask them to do (absolutely) and nobody wants that.
Z. So why do we say it?
W. So why do we say we want critical thinkers?
Z. Yes, why do we say that?
Y. Maybe because we all wish it was possible, because we wish someone would question the way things are and we hope that we can have it in the future?
V. I'd like to know who says that we want critical thinkers? (overlapping talk)
Z. I think we get that message a lot, just sort of a general societal message -- almost a popular myth about what we want schools to achieve -- even though we don't really want these thinkers living in our schools as students or teachers!

*X's Reflection:* *Certainly it is not the creative, the critical thinkers who excel academically or professionally in our schools. More likely it's the worksheet kids.*

### .... Where democracy is silent and the old hag speaks

V. I'd love to ask our administrators what they want, what they think the well educated person looks like - not in a textbook, but walking down the halls and sitting in the classrooms, and attending the staff meetings in their schools?
Z. I wonder if their well educated person would be somebody who could function well in a healthy democratic organization? And, if so, why they provide so few chances for teachers and students to participate this way in the school.

*X's Reflection:* *This is so important. Our classrooms could be models for learning social democracy, or they can sadly be ruled by one despot - the* *teacher under the authority of the administration.*

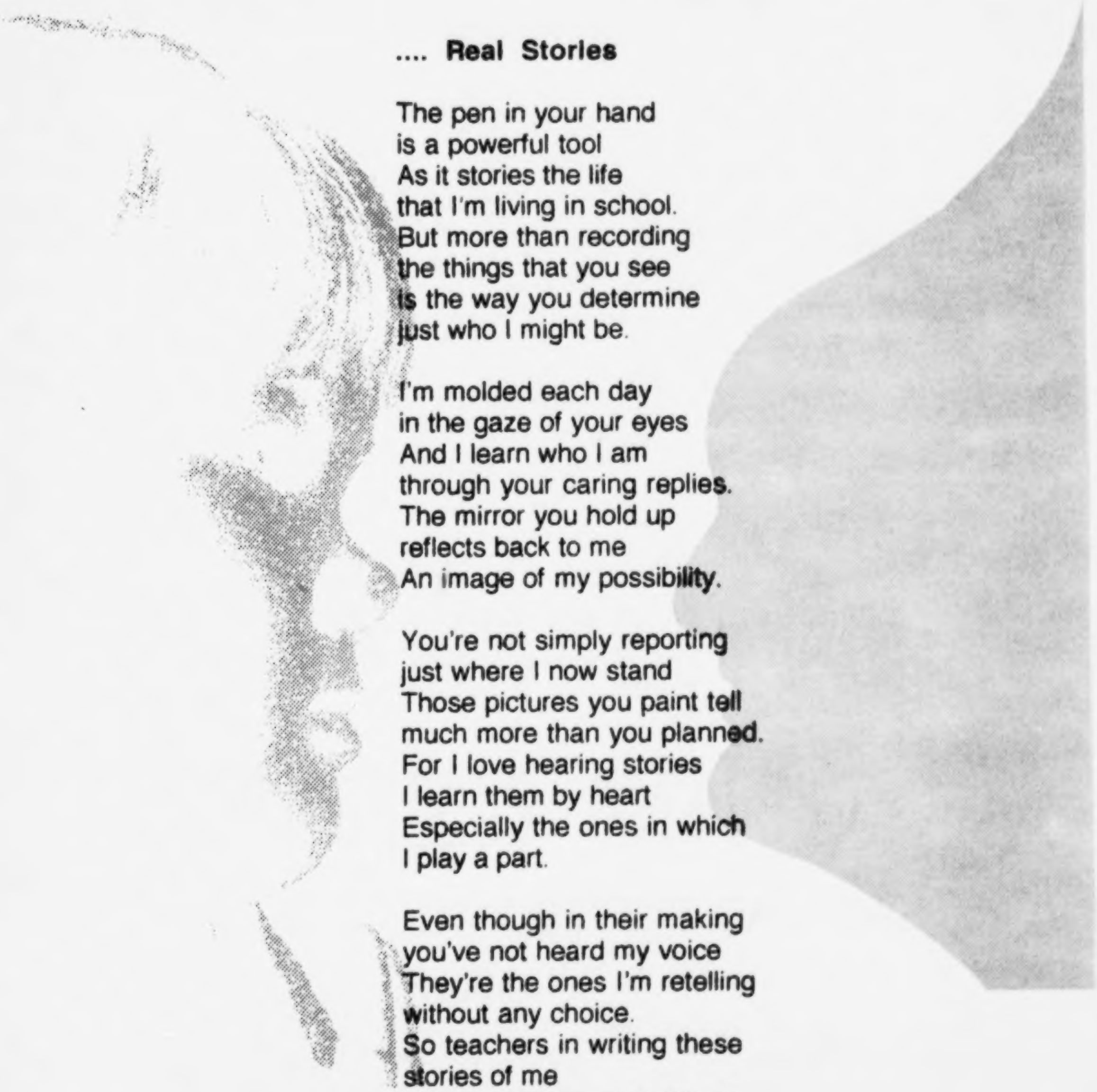
V. I don't think the word would come up.
W. Well as long as you're a member of the party in control, you're a critical thinker. (laughter)
Z. But most schools would say somewhere in their mission statements that they are trying to prepare good citizens, wouldn't they? (they would say that) What is a good citizen?
V. Someone who doesn't kill people. Someone who follows the rules.
W. I think that that's what we're looking at here, someone who follows the rules. I think that if you look at the history of education, it will be demonstrated that public schools are not places for critical thinking.
W. I could say that about the last school I was at quite easily. Some of the staff members were not even willing to look at things from a different perspective, to admit to the possibility of another valid point of view. We were told we were going to have a math hall of fame and I tried to express a different point of view because of my own experiences as a child. I'm not against learning math facts, but I am concerned about pasting the scores on the wall publicly for everyone to see along with a list of the most improved. I imagine there would be other children like I was, children who would not be too keen on having their name on the wall in the most improved area. So I told a story about my own experiences in math as a student. But there was no conversation about this story. It wasn't even heard. It was just - this is the way it is. It's good for motivation.
Y. We have a math hall of fame and it's very successful. We don't have the scores up though until (mmmhmm) you get past a certain point. I think we all try to make it so that every student eventually makes it.
W. Well the way it worked at our school, the children who did well, did well anyway so what was the point of having a math hall of fame.
Y. The kids in our school seem to love it and they don't have to do it if they don't want to.
W. It's nice though that they have that choice (mmmhmm), because I remember Shelley, a student who was a lot like me, who would make herself sick about taking a test. But this is another story and fortunately I didn't have to give the math test because I was team teaching and didn't teach math (mmmhmm) so I avoided the situation other than voicing my concerns at the staff meeting.
Y. But if they had listened to your story and discussed your story and took it into consideration and then went ahead and had the math hall of fame anyway, how would you have felt?
W. I would have at least felt that there was conversation. As it was, I said my little blurb, told my little story, and it was kind of like oh, that's embarrassing to talk about something personal. It was like confessing that there was something wrong with me as a child (hysterical laughter) (overlapping talk). First of all, personal experience is not something that we bring up and then it

didn't go anywhere, there was no response.
Y. Thank you for sharing that! Let's get on with it. (back on track right?) (overlapping talk)
V. We've always done it this way just be quiet. (laughter)
Y. Maybe some people who have always done everything the same way should be moving. . . .
V. And the first two people I would move are the administrators. I wouldn't necessarily move teachers because a lot of them are asking questions even if they are under the table questions asked in very frustrated kinds of ways. But at least they're asking questions. There's no room to talk about them, or have somebody say what do you mean by that. There's no middle space where we can get to the real heart of the issues. A couple are really vocal at staff meetings but they've been there for twenty years so the administration just attributes their unhappiness to age.
W. That's sort of a woman's story, a women's theme.
V. The age thing, the hag who speaks her mind. She doesn't get ostracized, she just gets dismissed. . . a crazy old woman. . . . what could she know?

Reflective Turn:

> Nobody hears if old women say yes or no, nobody pays them sixty cents for anything. Old men run things. Old men run the show, press the buttons, make the wars, make the money. . . . But old women live in the cracks, between the walls, like roaches, like mice, a rustling sound, a squeaking. . . .It's terrible, you turn up a corner of civilization and there are all these old women running around on the wrong side. . . . I know that many men and even women are afraid and angry when women do speak, because in this barbaric society, when women speak truly they speak subversively - they can't help it: if you're underneath, if you're kept down, you break out, you subvert. We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains. That's what I want. . . .I want to hear you. I want to listen to you talking to each other and to us all: whether you're writing an article or a poem or a letter or teaching a class or talking with friends or reading a novel or making a speech or proposing a law or giving a judgment or singing the baby to sleep or discussing the fate of nations, I want to hear you. Speak with a woman's tongue. Come out and tell us what time of night it is! Don't let us sink back into silence. If we don't tell our truth, who will? Who'll speak for my children, and yours? (Le Guin, 1989, pp. 158 - 160).

# CHAPTER FIVE
# CURRICULUM AS A MIDDLE SPACE: OUR "TELLING" STORIES



### .... Real Stories

The pen in your hand
is a powerful tool
As it stories the life
that I'm living in school.
But more than recording
the things that you see
is the way you determine
just who I might be.

I'm molded each day
in the gaze of your eyes
And I learn who I am
through your caring replies.
The mirror you hold up
reflects back to me
An image of my possibility.

You're not simply reporting
just where I now stand
Those pictures you paint tell
much more than you planned.
For I love hearing stories
I learn them by heart
Especially the ones in which
I play a part.

Even though in their making
you've not heard my voice
They're the ones I'm retelling
without any choice.
So teachers in writing these
stories of me
You're creating what I'll call
reality.
(Schroeder, 1993a)

Madeleine Grumet (1988) has said "A curriculum designed for my child is a conversation that leaves space for her responses, that is transformed by her questions" (p. 172). She suggests that "We need to re-create safe places, even in schools, where teachers can concentrate, can attend to their experience of children and of the world; and we need to create community spaces where the forms that express that experience are shared" (p. 90). She "invites us to refuse to run the classroom like a conveyance, designed to transport children from the private to the public world, but to make it instead a real space in the middle" (p.20).

Transcripts: (p. 13)
M. Am I right if I say that in this group we're trying to get at that area - to explore how we create that area - that you're terming the middle space? It's the space I like to think of as the cloak around the child. The cloak which protects the child from the demands of the school board, the demands of the administration, the demands of the society, all the demands and expectations which are placed on the child by others and which define what becoming educated will mean for the children in our schools. And it is the space, where we as teachers are constantly trying to balance the needs of the child with external demands and expectations. Is that the middle space? Is that right? Is that the area you're exploring?

Research Journal: For more than two years, our collaborative story telling group explored the boundaries and the curriculum of middle space which falls between. For more than two years, we tried to name our feelings and story our experiences. And through storying and restorying the experiences of the teachers and the children who live in our schools we tried to understand what a middle space for students and teachers might look like; through our association, writing and presentations we tried to create the community spaces where these experiences could be shared and restoried yet again. In storying and restorying the middle space, knowledge of the middle space was constructed and reconstructed, boundaries were crossed and lines drawn as we created middle space for ourselves and for each other as teachers and as knowledge constructors.

Reflective Turn: In her collaborative work with teachers, Miller (1992) wanted to look at how the reconceptualization of curriculum, informed by feminist, critical, phenomenological and post-structural perspectives could help her understand "the intersections of personal and social constructions of teaching, curriculum, and research" (p. 245). As well as intersections, however, she found wide gaps between these "contemporary curriculum discourses that challenged traditional conceptions of curriculum as prescribed content or course of study, of teaching as transmission of content, and of research as means of prediction and control" (p. 246), and the lived experiences of teachers in classrooms. While university researchers may have reconceptualized curriculum to include process, visible and invisible forms of content and knowledge construction, both society with its curriculum reform agenda (Titley & Mazurek[1] , 1990), and schools still conceptualized curriculum "as 'content' or a 'course of study,' as information that could be dispensed by teachers, received by students at predetermined, developmentally appropriate stages, and then returned to the teacher in measurable, testable, and standardized forms" (p. 248). However, Miller found that the usefulness of the contemporary discourses, for understanding and "changing the educational landscape" (Martin, 1994) could be seen in the way they enabled the participants in her research group to view their lives and stories as more than idiosyncratic happenings and to see how their "habitual responses, roles, expectations, and resulting educator identities often have been constructed by intersections of personal, social, historical, and economic forces" (p. 250).

Clandinin and Connelly (1992) expressed concern that curriculum theory has been constructed apart from the stories teachers were living and telling in their classrooms. In order to address this concern, we told our stories and listened to each others' stories. In our tellings, retellings and reflections we came to understand the middle space as the place where teachers and students live at the centre of curriculum and curriculum theory. However, in our educational institutions, we find this middle space is often located in the margins rather than at the center of the mainstream story. Because of this discrepancy, we found many of our stories speak of the conflicting demands and the ambiguity we experienced as we attempted to create a space between the mandated curriculum and the lived world of children, between the schools' expectations and the child's realizations, between society and self. Because of this discrepancy, we found creating a sacred space in a public place is difficult and often lonely.

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[1] In "Back to the Basics? Forward to the Fundamentals," (in Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues, 1990), Titley and Mazurek write, "Back to basics is little more than a hollow slogan of convenience. The alleged decline of standards has become the furtive smokescreen behind which politicians attempt to slash educational spending and return the schools to a more spartan and utilitarian type of teaching. Accountability has become the key word. Schools are expected to give value for money by focusing the teaching process on skills that have a readily discernible economic use. Personal fulfillment and self-realization are giving way to marketability. Social criticism is giving way to social utility. The young are expected to become productive members of the socioeconomic system without questioning its raison d'etre. The purpose is not to find one's self but to find a job - or, better still, create one. In a sense, then, education is still seen as an investment - but a carefully monitored and controlled one" (p. 125).

We questioned the assumptions underpinning a mandated curriculum which posits learners as received knowers rather than constructivists. We challenged the simplistic notions of curriculum as a document or a course of study, and of teachers as technicians who transmit knowledge and measure learning. Accounts of our attempts to "refuse to run the classroom like a conveyance, designed to transport children from the private to the public world, but make it instead a real space in the middle" (Grumet, 1988, p. 20), have often been places of ambiguity and dilemma, the place of stories. For these reasons, the stories we tell as we question the sacred stories of our society and try to interrupt the dominant discourses of our schools have become "telling stories" In the telling of our stories and in our "telling stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994b) we explore how teachers are integral to the curriculum and the middle space which is constructed and enacted in classrooms. Through these stories, we support conceptions of curriculum which honor the complexity of teaching and learning as knowledge construction and as collaborative spaces for action.

# PART I.

## IMAGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

> Situations call forth our images from our narrative of experience, and these images are available to us as guides to future action. An image reaches into the past, gathering up experiential threads meaningfully connected to the present. And it reaches intentionally into the future and creates new meaningfully connected threads as situations are experienced and new situations anticipated from the perspective of the image. Thus, images are part of our past, called forth by situations in which we act in the present, and are guides to our future. Images as they are embodied in us entail emotion, morality, and aesthetics (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 60).

Reflective Turn: Stating that the prolific critiques of positivistic ideology and practices dominating the curriculum field have had little audience outside the academic realm and little impact on interrupting systems of power, Goodman (1992) looks at the place of a discourse of imagery in critical curriculum theorizing. He argues for a discourse which moves past the "discourse of criticism" (which has often led to a discourse of despair as it worked to heighten our awareness of the relationship between schooling and the broader sociohistorical context within which education takes place), and beyond the "discourse of possibility" (which present visions of transformative teachers in democratic schools but provide little indication of how this will be achieved) to a critical educational discourse of imagery ("a theoretical language that is informed by and rooted in images of real... people involved in tangible actions that take place in believable settings" (p. 281), and thus toward a new "politics of hope" (p. 286).

Goodman sees this discourse of imagery which is rooted within a cultural and historical context, as one which will present and explore "particularistic phenomena...in the light of larger contexts" (p. 283). Both verbal and visual images will be used to "give voice to the actions of teachers in classrooms who are struggling to develop a critical pedagogy" (p. 285) and, as such, this discourse will be situated within a larger political agenda.

Connelly and Clandinin (1994b) speak about awakening to the possibility of new ways to tell our stories. As "the horizons of our knowing shift and change ... we awaken to new ways of seeing our world, to different ways of seeing ourselves in relation to each other and to the world. We begin to retell our stories with new insights, in new ways" (p.p. 154 - 155). They also look at how these new retellings can lead to a transformation in the way we relive "our stories in changed actions in our lives" (p. 155).

The images and the stories in this research story are presented as a small step in the development of that new discourse which seeks to move us beyond the identification of problems in the present educational system and toward the construction of a middle space for teachers and students in the classroom, a space where stories can be relived in new ways.

### .... Out of the mouths of babes

Transcripts: (p. 18)

M. *When my daughter Caitlin, who is very bright, was in grade two she had a wonderful teacher. The kids played their way through the curriculum that year and Caitlin learned a tremendous amount. We had purposely requested that she be put into this one-two class because she is such a high achiever and we thought if she was put in the two-three split she would feel compelled to master all of the grade three work. However, at the end of November she came to me and said very seriously, "I'm not going to be ready for grade three if I stay in this class." I asked her why she thought such a thing and she said, "I've been checking it out and they're doing way more work than we are. We are not working. We are playing. I will not be ready for grade three. You'd better move me into the other class right away."*

*My first inclination was to laugh, but I quickly realized that she was genuinely concerned. So beginning to be disquieted by her perceptions of her schooling experience, I tried to explain to her just how much she was learning. Ironically she was put into that other room for grade three. Half-way through the year she came to me again saying, "Mom, I'm not learning anything and this time I really mean it." So I said, "Caitlin, do you remember that you begged to come into this class last year?" She said, "I know mom, but I'm not learning anything. It looked like work but it's the same old thing. I learned more last year." And I said, " I know you did. But how could I have explained that to you last year?"*

Lisa's Reflection: *I think that the toughest part of creating middle space is that you are always bumping up against not only yourself and what you view* *learning to be, but against the expectations of the system, of other teachers, and of twenty-eight different students and their parents many of whom have come to believe that unless their child gets an hour's worth of math sheets every night, they're not working or learning!*

Research Journal: This story was important to Margaret, not just because of her own daughter's concerns but because she feels these concerns provide a reflection of commonly held misconceptions about what teaching and learning are and should be. She herself had a very non-traditional schooling experience and Caitlin's learning prior to coming to school was experience-based and open-ended, but somehow in only her second year of schooling another story had already distorted Caitlin's idea of what learning and school should look like! It is this dominant story and the way it is lived out in schools that Margaret knows she must interrupt if she is going to create a middle space in her classroom.

Reflective Turn: In the chapter, "Teachers Under Suspicion: Is it true that teachers aren't as good as they used to be?" (Steinberg & Britzman,1992), Steinberg writes,

> Why isn't teaching fun time? Schools seem determined to impress upon children and parents that 'being a good citizen' entails not having fun, and that good teaching consists of rule-making, structured lessons, stringent curriculum and right or wrong answers to formula questions....Many schools isolate learning time and fun time. The New Right's thrust to the 'good ole days' of schooling have reinforced the lack of humor and diversity in teaching (p. 69).

Telling the story of her own less than successful experience in a school which had no space to accommodate her "problem behaviour", Steinberg introduces us to Mrs. G, her ninth grade English teacher, who she says "had a way of tolerating my interruptions, accommodating and answering my questions" (p. 68) and whose qualities of empathy, humor and the ability to connect the students' lives with the school curriculum made her a teacher long to be remembered.

Transcripts: (p. 247 - 249)
D. Jean and Michael and a group of teachers from Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto have been looking at the professional knowledge landscapes of teaching and learning. In many ways, they are also talking about middle space because what comes down to teachers through the conduit - policy, mandated curriculum, achievement testing - directly impacts on their ability to create a middle space in their classrooms. If you as a teacher are trying to create a certain environment in your classroom and this external "stuff" keeps coming down from the top, you're very much a buffer between the world of the children and the world of policy. I think being in the position of trying to protect students from everything that comes down the conduit puts teachers under a lot of stress. Good administrators try to do the same thing. They stand between the conduit and the teacher so there's a double filter between external demands and the child. I see this as being very similar to what I have identified as teacher dilemmas brought about by the conflicting demands teachers face as they attempt to construct a middle space with their students.
M. The image of the conduit also lets you see that the impact of what comes down on teachers will depend on where and how the teachers are standing in relation to the conduit. If they are standing together as a collaborative team, "the water" will not hit them with as much force as it would hit individuals standing alone. (mmmhmm)

*Lisa's Reflection: This is really significant for me. It is so difficult trying to teach alone. I've never had to do this before. I find it undermines my confidence. There's strength in numbers.*

D. Can you talk about that some more?
M. Well, if teachers are working in isolation all the force is going to hit each of them individually but if they're working together, they can withstand the force together as a team.
D. I can see how that was storied out in our school with the implementation of program continuity. We were working toward what we had defined as program continuity as a staff. It might not have been what everyone else was defining as program continuity but when outside messages came down to us telling us what we had to do, we had a collective voice already established which helped us respond to all the directives. Or when people started to say program continuity had been abandoned, dismantle everything you're doing, we could stand together and say, "No. This was good teaching practice. We don't need to call it program continuity, but no we're not going to dismantle our multi-aged groups, or no we're not going to dismantle some of the other practices because we've been using them and we see they work." So in that way, I do see there is strength in collaboration to withstand the onslaught of external directives. I think there needs to be more of it though. (yes)

Transcripts: (pp. 224 - 230)
D. How did your time with your student teacher go?
L. Well she was only in my classroom for the last two weeks of her practicum. The teacher she'd worked with for ten weeks felt badly that she hadn't had the chance to teach full time in her room, and wondered if she could do some full time teaching in my class.
M. When she was only going to spend two weeks in your room!

*Lisa's Student Teacher Story*

*L. Well as it turned out, she really didn't do any teaching in my room. Because the students had already had a change in teachers this year, I just didn't feel comfortable about letting her interrupt their learning. She didn't seem to be receptive to doing the things I thought she might like to try, and I wasn't willing to let her disrupt the middle space that the students and I had worked so hard to construct.*

*Lisa's Reflection: A sacred space - I weighed it out at the time and felt the need to preserve this - it still seemed fragile - perhaps at the expense of Jane, my student teacher. I didn't feel connected enough yet to open this space to her.*

Research Journal: It would seem to me that handing over a program is much different from handing over students or a relationship you have with those students.

*It's going to be hard for Jane when she has her own class but I didn't know what to do about it. There wasn't much I could do because she had just spent a comfortable ten weeks in a very directed teaching-learning environment. This school operates on the philosophy of teacher/administration direction and control. So I thought that, in the two weeks she had to spend with me, I wanted to stir her up. I wanted her to start thinking about some other ways of living with students. I wanted her to start questioning what was going on in the classroom. We were doing a lot of writing, so I did a lot of talking about what writing was all about, and about how I understood my practice. I gave her Nancy Atwell's book but she wasn't really interested in it. In fact, when we were doing our writing which was scheduled in long blocks of time, she looked at that as, "Well the kids are working quietly now I can go and do my other things." (gasps from us) But that's what she'd seen, when the kids are all (yes) sitting working quietly then you can go do your marking. That's what she'd seen for ten weeks. So I tried to model what I had been saying to her. In writing time, I find that I get run off my feet, nicely though, I really love it.*

*(mmmhmm) I sort of run myself off my feet! They don't need me, but I tried to talk to her about how this is my touch (Lisa highlighted this on rereading) with them. It's my way of seeing where they are and where they're going, how they're doing with it and what they're learning and to watch them work with each other too. I'm actually more of an observer than anything else with them now, but still I need to be there when someone's stuck and can't seem to get out or to just sort of fertilize things....*

Lisa's Reflection: *I love the organic nature of writing - composting!*

*....a little bit more. But she just said, "Well, I can see how this approach works for this age but I couldn't do it with younger kids." So, ( incredulous laughter) I tried to tell her some grade one stories. We were doing a lot of paired writing with a grade one class who were quite capable of doing their own writing without us, but I found we enhanced each other's writing so I tried to show her how the students learned from each other but....I don't know if she was just tired or (Hmm) I don't know.*

M. So in her whole practicum, in her whole twelve weeks, she never taught full time? (Can't hear L's response--assume she shook her head as we all laughed!)
K. There is quite a variety of experiences in the practicum program. Some of the students are teaching from day one even when they switch to the next division. And then you have others who have not even taught for a whole day.

Anne's Reflection: *I think there needs to be more practical practicum time in the schools for student teachers anyway - lots more. There is nothing like the day to day experience to give one a sense of the ebb and flow of a classroom's life. As a student teacher I feel sure that I would have misunderstood the concept of middle space or seen it as something very tangible like adapting the curriculum to meet individual needs. The more one experiences life in the classroom the less tangible the definition of middle space becomes and the more complex it gets!*

D. So, what do you think the student teacher's story of these last two weeks would be?
L. I'm not going to teach that way. (yes) (long pause) I got lots of messages. (Did you?) Yes. (a very long pause)

Research Journal: I want to try to interpret our pause because it seemed that as Lisa spoke our shoulders drooped a bit and for me at least part of the reason for this drooping is connected to the middle space. I sense a sadness in our thinking here. I sense a tiredness from our efforts of trying to make a difference, to improve things for our students and for all students, to create a middle space against the grain. As we try to interrupt the stories which invisibly order the world of school, we realize that our efforts to create a middle space is a long uphill climb. We realize that there are many barriers along the way which are often invisible. . .

Lisa's Reflection: *In my case quite a few are visible, the open area being one. It sounds like a contradiction but with walls, one can often create the space one wants. Whereas, in this open area if I attempt to create a middle space I invade everyone else's space. I'm constantly told we're too noisy and we're not. Silence is the expectation that hangs like a black net over the school.*

....but which are very hard to get over or around. These barriers only become concrete as we see them storied out through the actions and attitudes of the students and teachers we work with. In Lisa's story, the student teacher was already socialized into a way of being that we saw as a barrier to our desire to create the middle space. The image of what school is or what it's supposed to be in our society - a place to transmit and receive knowledge, a system of transportation from the personal to the public - exerts a lot of influence in our thinking. This story needs to be questioned but as the dominant discourse it is so hard to interrupt.

Lisa's Reflection: *Yes!! It feels so negative, conformity.*

Anne's Reflection: *Isn't it though? I don't know much about change theory, but change seems to come about painfully slowly at least where the image of school is concerned. There are, of course, many changes taking place within classrooms all the time but this is not affecting the overall perspective of "school".*

M. You have to have a lot of confidence as a teacher yourself before you can create a middle space with a student teacher. You also have to have a lot of humility because they come into your classroom so opinionated before you've even begun. You haven't even done anything yet and they already have their ideas of how it should be. All you are to them is a plumb line. You're the plumb line for their opinions. It's hard.

L. I finish every day of teaching by thinking about alternative possibilities for what I could have done, what I should have done, what I will do next time. I tried to verbalize that process, that attitude for Jane, telling her this is what goes through my head at the end of every day, but instead of seeing this as a way to learn from her own teaching, she offered suggestions about what I should do. (hysterical laughter) I said well I've already tried that, I tried that eleven years ago (mmmhmm), that's not where I'm at with that. Since this didn't work, I thought maybe I needed to stop being a teller and start being a listener instead. So I listened way more than I talked and that was a little bit better. Jane tells a lot of stories of her own schooling and about her brother who they are having a hard time with at home right now. It's been hard on her family. She also told stories of her own spelling problems, and how spelling was difficult for her. I'd comment about how her experiences could help her as she set expectations for her pupils. So I've tried to get her to talk about her personal experiences in terms of the children she would work with in a classroom. I tried to say those kind of things, but I still don't know.

Research Journal: What image of school is it that we hold in our unconscious that can direct our thinking even when our own experience speaks to its negation? What institutionalized stories do we unthinkingly mirror?

*Lisa's Reflection: This is huge for me. So many things I see and do admittedly just don't make sense. Parents are part of this story too. Sometimes I feel pressure to perpetuate their institutionalized stories. Why do we feel this way?*

*Anne's Reflection: It is a little like the cyclical nature of abuse in some families. We often perpetuate what we know and what we have experienced whether we really know it to be right or not. For example I watched my K-5 teacher abuse her power in pretty scary ways. Now that is not what I want to do, and yet I can not honestly say there haven't been moments of frustration or overload when I've been tempted to behave in the same way.*

M. Sometimes I think the learning for teachers is not as much in the practicum experience as it is in what happens afterwards, in the reflection, as they go back and rethink these experiences in the context of their own teaching. (mmmhmm, yes) I know when I started teaching I would be conscious that I was doing things differently than my co-operating teacher had. But some of the things she said still come back to me (mmmhmm) and remind me.
L. I guess part of my concern and dilemma was trying to figure out what was the focus in the classroom, her learning to teach or the students' learning. She was very focused on her own ways of working things out but the kids didn't seem to be part of that thinking. They weren't part of her teaching story.
M. It also depends upon what the student teacher's idea of learning is. I think they often have the idea that out there somewhere, there is a perfect teacher and that (yes )they're going to be able to receive all of their knowledge from that perfect teacher. So they try to determine very quickly if you are the one

who will do this for them. But it's just not like that, that's not how we learn. One of the things that I like about our school is that I think collectively we're a really good example of teaching. (yes) Because we all do things differently, I would never want to say that a student should only go to one teacher, or only be with me because each situation offers the possibility for constructing our knowledge of teaching.
D. Yes, in fact I think I feel a little bit like Lisa. I almost feel sorry for a student teacher who comes to me because I think the process that's going on in my classroom is so complex....

*Lisa's Reflection: (Lisa underlined the words "the process that's going on in my classroom is so complex" and commented) How does our system possibly claim to evaluate this complexity?*

....(overlapping talk) that it's almost impossible to explain to someone else. I'm half a career into constructing my teaching story. I'm at a place that I've come to over time, and here's somebody just starting who wants me to give her this knowledge in a nice neat package, or worse yet (as Lisa and Margaret said) a student teacher who doesn't think she can learn anything new in my room. I worry about how I can open up a space where the student teacher can learn and yet not to be totally overwhelmed and swallowed up by something that is very complex. It is so difficult to put that knowing into words, (yes) much harder than writing objectives or standing up and delivering a lesson.

M. But the times when it happens, where there is that connection, and you are part of that learning, is what keeps me going as a co-operating teacher. I can accept their learning on all different levels. The only experiences I don't like are those where it's just not happening at all....

Research Journal: How are these teaching-learning connections part of what we see as middle space? How is our acceptance of different "levels" of connection or learning part of what we want to say is the middle space in our classrooms?

M. ....And I've only ever had that happen once. In that case, I should have said at the end of two weeks this is not going to work because there is a personality conflict, or this person just doesn't want to be in this kind of classroom....(long pause after this very tentatively voiced conclusion)

Research Journal: I'm wondering if this middle space - which we see as something positive and enabling - is perceived as scary, or indecisive, or somehow disconcerting to others - perhaps to many others? I'm wondering if in trying to create this space we aren't disrupting a "sacred story" that not everyone wants to see altered or even questioned? It's easier - on one level - to live in a tightly scripted story where there is not room for ambiguity or personal emotion and response. Remember in one of our first meetings when Margaret expressed some concern over the "lack of a specific agenda" for these conversations - I don't think this is a concern specific to Margaret - I think we can all identify instances (like this research project) when it would be less cognitively and affectively (as well as socially and politically) disruptive to be a "workbook kid."

*Anne's Reflection: But school is such a long term thing. Maybe yes, one might want a tight agenda for a meeting. But day after day in school, I think one needs to feed the soul as well as the mind.*

L. Student teachers are in a difficult position too, because they are all hoping for a job and there is so much riding on their practicum experience and how well they make themselves known in the school. One co-operating teacher in our school recommended that her student get an evaluation from the principal because she felt the student was very good. The principal evaluated her - the other two didn't get an evaluation from him - so if there is a position available and she applies for it, he might consider her because she fits into his image of the good teacher. But that's not who I am. I don't fit into that model, so a student teacher in my classroom wouldn't have that same experience or opportunity. By working with me they could have severed a connection rather than making one. So, knowing this, I wanted to try to be as fair as I could to Jane. I wasn't required to do a formal evaluation for her time in my classroom and thought that since I'm not really a member of this particular community it would not be fair for me to voice my concerns.
D. Could she not have stayed with the teacher she was with?
L. She could have except that her co-operating teacher wanted her to be with some older kids. She'd only worked at one grade level and she wanted her to be with preadolescents (laughter) in April. (laughter) The co-operating teachers really didn't know what to do. Should they keep the student teachers in one class for the whole time, or should they be in different grades? When and how should that work? They wanted more direction but I think how they worked it out was okay because they seemed to go by what the student teacher wanted and they all seemed to get a range of experiences.

*Lisa's Reflection: Comments I hear in this school often centre around teachers wanting more specifics. For example, the social studies curriculum is too general - tell me what to teach - the practicum needs to have a more rigid format, tell me what to do, when and how - the evaluation procedure is too* *general - in both our report cards and the practicum.*

Reflective Turn: Long after our stories were told, I was reading the book, *Learning to teach: Teaching to learn* (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennard, 1993). I had eagerly awaited its publication and couldn't figure out why the stories which offered such possibility and hope stirred such feelings of sadness in me. I couldn't figure it out, until today when in the process of reconstructing the research text, I reread our stories of teacher education and felt the pain of student teachers and co-operating teachers caught in a story of teacher education not of their own making.

Research Journal: I quickly pull the book off the shelf. I don't have time to reread it but I feel compelled to skim its pages once more. I glance at the clock sitting on the bookshelf above my computer. This skimming is taking a long time, I think. I keep getting pulled into the stories and my quick read is turning into a rather lengthy process. Suddenly, I am struck by the difference between my rather hurried reading and the very long time these student teachers and co-operating teachers have to work together, the long time they have to learn together. I think of the contrast between Lisa who had only two weeks with her student teacher and Kerry and Angela who have a whole year to restory themselves through working together (Chapters 7 & 15).

I think of the difference between Kerry who is working within an alternative program which recognizes her as both a learner and a teacher, and the traditional practicum which positions the teacher as expert, someone who already knows and who will pass her knowledge on if the student teacher judges her competent to do so. I can feel Lisa's confusion. She is a teacher who is working to construct a middle space with the students in her classroom. She knows how important this space is for learning and for developing a whole rather than a fragmented sense of oneself, but in her role of co-operating teacher she is living out an institutionalized story of teacher education which leaves no place for making sense of the practicum experience she finds herself caught in.

As I reread Barbara Kennard's (1993) story, "Restorying the expert-novice relationship in the practicum experience," I realize how hard it is to tell new stories alone. I think that no one should try to tell new stories alone and I realize how much I am missing the presence of Kelly, Anne, Margaret and Lisa as I work to restory our conversations in the research text. I think it would be a lot less difficult and a lot more fun if we had all been here laughing, crying and retelling this new story together.

## .... Teaching to learn: Going where the gaps are

Transcripts: (pp. 249 - 254)
L. How has your teaching changed?
M. Mine?
L. How is it changing?
M. In what way?
L. I don't know.
M. You mean from when I started?
L. Yes.
M. I'm a lot more able to listen to kids. I'm a lot less planned and I go a lot more with where the gaps are. I do not plan in the summer because I can't plan until I see the kids. I first find out what they're interested in and then I plan my year. I have a tentative feeling about how it will go, but my teaching is guided much more by my diagnostic assessments of what the students need than on my need to deliver prescribed curriculum. I am also much more willing to go with a conversation than a lesson. For instance, today I read them a story called *The Streets Are Free*, and it led into a social studies topic and we just kept it going until the students were losing interest and then we stopped. Whereas, I never would have done that before.

Reflective Turn: In looking at the everyday practice of teachers, William Ayers (1992) explores the concern that teachers feel when they depart from the prescribed curriculum and go with the gaps. He suggests this concern is partly due to the worry that deviation from the prescribed curriculum might be discovered, but even more it is because of feelings that students are being cheated out of information. This feeling, he says, is the result of an approach to curriculum which assumes that knowledge is finite and knowing is passive, rather than something which is interactive and constructed by the participants. He suggests that critical theory can not be divorced from the voices of classroom teachers struggling with these questions but neither does he advocate the abandonment of theory which helps us organize and understand our experiences in the world even as it cuts us off from other understandings.

*Lisa's Reflection: I don't feel I have the freedom to do this. There's a lot of ambiguity in conversation, things that aren't visible or measurable with the tools we presently use.*

*Anne's Reflection: I think Margaret's story is related to our understanding of middle space because Margaret is able to do what feels right to her in the classroom now, she is less restricted by the shoulds and the musts that constricted her beginning teaching. She is able to do this partly because of her own experience and her knowledge of teaching and middle space and partly because there is an enabling middle space in her school.*

M. And yet, I would never have done printing at the beginning of my teaching career and now I do. Sentence dictation, some of the spelling things I never would have done before I do now because I think structure, little pieces of structure, like piano lessons, are important to kids if they don't get it anywhere else in their lives. To learn that you have to do some jobs you don't particularly enjoy because they will have future benefits is important. Whereas, at the beginning of my teaching career I would have said if they're not enjoying it, they're not going to do it, and they're not going to learn so let's not do it. So I was really restricted in what I was free to do. I did not have as many choices. I was ruled more by what others knew, than by what I knew.

(A very long pause - I thought we ran out of tape, but saw the counter moving.)

### ....Making time and taking time

M. How about you?
L. I ask myself that question every day because I feel really smothered. I don't feel that I have the space or time, the freedom to go with the conversation. I feel that less and less, and I find that really hard. I wonder if I have always been this way because I taught at this school before and I felt comfortable here before. Why am I feeling so uncomfortable now? Have they changed or have I changed or is it both? When I have felt comfortable enough, I've wanted to go with where the kids are going, where they may be needing me more. I remember taking the time to do this when I first started teaching, within the first month or so, because I worked with a woman who supported me and who helped me talk that through. I didn't feel the constant need to justify my teaching to someone who wouldn't understand it. I didn't have an administrator coming in asking me to be accountable for what I was doing

between 2:10 p.m. to 2:40 p.m. if it said health on my schedule and we were doing something else. I feel so much like that right now. I wonder if I am fooling myself by thinking I was a more flexible teacher ten years ago when I really wasn't. I certainly know I fit in better ten year ago and I fit in less well now, so what is it?
K. Is it the same grade level?
L. Just one higher. You know when I think of the middle space, I think I've said this before, mine started about this big (arms opened) and now it's about this big (arms closed). (overlapping talk)
D. Something you just said made me remember a conversation from our first meeting. Do you remember I told you that initially I was looking at something that I called facilitating structure, a structure that's in place so these things are able to happen, but then I decided that I didn't want to look at the structure, (yes, yes) I wanted to look at the spaces between the bars? Well, when you were talking just now, I thought, she's talking about a facilitating structure, a structure which allows you to have that space. But I feel there's something in the structure of your school that's squeezing those spaces.
L. But was it there all along, and I was just a different person who for some reason fit better into that, and I don't anymore, or what?
D. No, I don't really believe people change that radically.
L. I don't think so either, but I wish I could just step back into my head ten years ago because that's the only way I could know for sure.
M. I think you can trust yourself to remember, if for no other reason than because you ask yourself every day how your teaching has changed. I think that suggests you aren't feeling what you used to feel.
L. I always felt a sense of freedom with what I did. I mean freedom in that I trusted the learning that was happening in the classroom with myself and kids and whoever else might have been there. I trusted that. I guess I trusted the ambiguity of the learning process and a lot of wonderful things came out of that trust. But I don't have that any more. I have no sense of freedom to enjoy the spontaneity of going in a different direction or to explore other possibilities. There is just no time in the day which is not accounted for and which I am not accountable for using in a prescribed and predetermined way.

Research Journal: I wonder if Margaret and Lisa's stories help us understand some of the elements of what we will call middle space and in that way help us learn more about how we can create it in our classrooms?

*Anne's Reflection: Yes, they help me think about freedom. I feel I had it in Wollaston Lake. We could try new things, share ideas, give more to the students. In La Ronge, that freedom wasn't there. Things were rigid, immovable. We've done it this way before, therefore it must always be done this way. Stifling atmosphere. No freedom.*

M. Have you ever wondered if the lack of middle space you are feeling in your school is the result of coming into the classroom halfway through the year?
L. I don't think so, because the problem is not with the kids. They've shown me lots of sparks. Just lots and lots and lots of sparks but I have messages coming from all around me saying that's not what we do here. So, I try and hide the middle space. It's kind of like working undercover.
M. I'm not saying it is the kids but I wonder if coming in halfway through the year could have an impact on your feelings.
K. You did say Lisa, that in terms of your relationships and routines, it's like being in November.
L. Yes.
M. And thinking about my own class, I'm not sure I was totally at ease with embracing as much ambiguity in November as I am now. I think the ability to construct the middle space continues to evolve as we live in that middle space with our students over time.

Research Journal: These comments lead me to think some more about the time it takes to construct middle space in our rooms and about how that middle space evolves over time. It's not just something we can have ready on the first day of school because it depends on our ability to build relationships and trust with the children. But in addition to requiring time to construct, I'm also seeing the middle space as bounded by time because I see us moving in and out of this middle space which implies time spent in middle space. But how does time operate within the middle space?

*Lisa's Reflection: This is an ebb and flow for me ... a letting go and pulling back as we get to know each other, as we weave our relationships.*

*Anne's Reflection: This is interesting. There are so many aspects to consider. I think the tone of the whole school, hence its potential to become a middle space is set by day one because it is so dependent on the staff. I do wonder though, how things like scheduling, school assemblies and resource room pull-outs, which impinge on our classroom time, affect the middle space we can create in our rooms. I have found I need big chunks of time to work with. It's not satisfactory to have twenty minutes here, fifteen there because the choppiness affects the way we feel, the middle space we have the time to construct.*

Transcripts: (pp.178 - 182)
K. I think Margaret is lucky in some ways, because she teaches grade one. Grade one teachers do have a little bit more freedom even in terms of the curriculum. When I talked to teachers who are in grade six it seemed like they

were much more harried in terms of having to get this done and this done and this done before the big exams in grade six. A lot of them expressed concern about that. I haven't taught grade six myself, I've taught older children, but I still can't help thinking about the differences between division one and division two. Even if you have an understanding of what curriculum is and what learning is, and hopefully that would be reflected in your teaching, there are restrictions as to what you can do and how much time you can spend outside the prescribed curriculum given that your students do have the grade six competency exams.
M. My students had to do the competency exams in grade three, which was last year. (yes) (overlapping talk) I did feel more pressured. I would go off on what might be considered tangents, but only so far. I certainly wouldn't stop a unit. I might take the time to go with conversation but I certainly wouldn't have done a unit change, which is what I have done this year that's true. (yes)

Research Journal: So these exams which come down the conduit, could certainly be cited as the cause of teacher dilemmas in that they restrict the time available to construct curriculum with children, to work together in the middle space. But if we see middle space as a space where the private and the public meet in conversation, how will we resolve the dilemma? Do we have to remove all outside influences in order to create a middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: Maybe not all outside influences have to be removed before we can create a middle space, but I think when standardized group tests are imposed externally learning inside the classroom is controlled and restricted. The time and space available for learning that is personally meaningful for the students is reduced. I don't see who these tests benefit, certainly not the teacher or the students, and if we look at how much time is spent not just practicing for the tests and taking them but apart from the middle space, we can see how they restrict our ability to construct a middle space with our students.*

*Lisa's Reflection: The way it is structured now, yes, we do need to remove external evaluation. It's destructive to students and to teachers who are forced to teach in ways they know to be harmful to their students.*

### .... The myth of the quiet classroom

Transcripts: (pp. 55 - 58)
M. I have a funny story to tell you....

### *"Shh, shh, shh"*

M. *I actually run quite a noisy classroom but I don't really notice the noise until someone else is in there, then I'm really conscious of it (mmhmm). Today another teacher asked if she could observe me so she was in my room when some parents dropped in with the siblings of my student. This is usually fine, but this morning there were two sets of parents, a volunteer, plus this teacher who was watching me. I was working with the kids on poetry, just two word poems using our dragon vocabulary. They were loving it and were doing really well. But they were excited and the noise level kept climbing up and up so I kept stopping the class. I'd say okay everyone, listen please and they'd all be quiet and I'd be looking around thinking now what am I going to say. I can't say anything to them because they're talking about their work. They're getting descriptive words. They're editing. They're helping each other out. So there was nothing for me to say. I kept stopping them for nothing (laughs). Then I'd say, no it's okay just go ahead and do your work. (mmmhmm) The noise was all legitimate but it was bothering me because of the myth of the quiet classroom.*

L. I do that a zillion times a day too. Because of where I am in the school, everyone watches me all day long. (overlapping talk) I live like that for six hours a day with the awful feeling that we're too noisy. I do that too, walk around saying shh, shh, shh, (mmhmm) and they stop and look at me and then go back to work exactly as they were doing.
M. Oh, okay.
L. Oh okay, we'll whisper. And they start whispering for five seconds (yes) and then.

*I finally told them though, one time when I did this, nobody's doing anything wrong you're all doing fine, it's just me. I have to have a little bit of quiet. (laughter) So we have a deal, if I put on the Brandenburg concerto, (laughter) that means no talking for ten minutes. Just through one concerto and then, then it's okay. (much laughter) Talk about controlling, but that's because I'm really not. So every so often, I feel that I have to exert this control, to prove to myself that I actually do... because I've had student teachers in who have said, I don't think I can work with you. There isn't enough control in this room.*

K. That's an interesting concept of control.
M. I just want to laugh (yes) because if they really knew, if control were a colour you could see, they'd be so surprised.
K. Just the fact that they do co-operate with you when you put the music on really says something about your working relationship.
M. And even though it's noisy, when you look around trying to find out what's just noise, and you can't find any in the midst of twenty-two talking children,

you know there must be control different than the authoritarian type. Or when the grade one and two students are doing shared reading for twenty-five minutes and everybody is reading for the whole twenty-five minutes, I think there's a lot of self control in that situation. It doesn't just happen magically. They certainly don't come in like that, being able to work and talk with each other as they're learning together.

L. I wonder why we expect silence from children when you can't put twenty-eight adults in a room where they're discussing anything in groups and hear yourself think. But we accept the myth that learning is a solitary, silent process in our classrooms. We think children shouldn't be allowed to talk to each other for some reason. I don't know why.

M. Because I think deep down, we don't really believe that the talking children do is learning. Whereas, we might think that adults are more focused.

K. Oh, no. Not necessarily. At university one of our professors didn't think that we would be working because we were in groups. So, the myth is still controlling the image of learning and the way it is storied in higher places of education, shall we say.

M. I've found that our staff meetings are often a lot less productive than what goes on in my class. Especially when we spend two hours discussing children running in the halls.

A. Or whether to lock the doors.

L. Even at teachers' convention this last week, I could see what was valued. Teachers don't value talk in the learning process. They go to sessions where knowledge is poured in and think that if anyone is talking it must be about their vacation!

D. I was at a forum for Faculty of Education undergraduate students last week at the university. They were discussing problems they were experiencing in their programs. One of the issues they mentioned was all of the group work which was being assigned. It was being assigned in several classes and they were finding it hard to get together outside of class time. So I brought up the idea that if we value group work and the place of collaborative conversation in the learning process, we should be giving time to the students to work together in class. If we thought of knowledge as constructed rather than received, group work would be part of the regularly scheduled class. A couple of professors said, "Hmm, well that is an interesting concept, isn't it?" But it wasn't taken any further. (low murmurs) I think it goes back to what counts as knowledge, and misconceptions of where and how learning will occur - only under quiet conditions, with one person talking. I think that helps explain why, when somebody else is in the room, you've got this feeling that you've got to get everything quiet. How could any learning be going on if it's noisy?

L. When we taught Elementary Education 370, we did schedule part of our group work during class time. We said we'd be down in the library if anyone needed any help. Most of the groups were down there working but the comments that I overheard were, they won't come to class if you schedule group time during class time. (And did they?) Some did and some didn't but that was irrelevant to us because the group work that we saw was outstanding. If they had other times to meet (mmhmm) and they were using that hour to do something else (what difference did it make?) Most of them were there though. M. And that's the same perspective you probably have in your classroom as a teacher. I mean even with grade one and two students, I will say you don't have this done what are you going to do? I don't sit over them waiting for them to finish. I say well you don't have this done yet and we're going on to this and you're welcome to join us but remember by the end of the day these are the things that you need to have completed and they do it. I don't care if they choose to do it later or earlier but if you don't believe that people are responsible for their own learning it's not going to make any difference if they're in university or in grade one. You have to trust that if you have constructed a middle space with them they will be learning because they are actively engaged in the learning process.

Reflective Turn: As we listen to teachers' and researchers' stories in recent literature on teaching, teacher knowledge, teacher education and teacher research (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennard, 1993; Hollingsworth, 1994; Miller, 1990; Witherell and Noddings, 1991), it is hard to miss the sense of empowerment and transformation that occurs as these teachers and researchers engage in collaborative storytelling, conversations, writing projects and research. It is also hard to miss the alienation they felt from their own knowing and from their own practice when they worked as isolated individuals in schools and universities. That all knowledge is not constructed in the contexts of such collaborative groups is not the point (even though knowledge as a social construct can not be denied), but what is worthy of notation is the excitement, the enthusiasm, the satisfaction that these (mainly) women achieved through working together, through breaking the silence with their stories, their songs, their laughter and their tears.

With these stories of empowerment and transformation at our fingertips, it is hard to believe that so many teachers and students are still confined and controlled by the myth of the silent classroom. It is even more suspicious when so many of them know that learning is an active, interactive, noisy, messy process and are quite comfortable with this "noise" when they are not being observed or evaluated. To understand how the silent classroom story continues to order the world of school and to figure out how to do school differently, I think we need to look at both epistemological and patriarchal influences on classrooms and curriculums.

Shirley Brown (1993) tells how her teaching was transformed as she altered the hidden curriculum of male hegemony and replaced the dialect of the father tongue (identified by Le Guin,1989, as the language of power and scientific discourse) with the mother tongue which "honors the personal, the subjective, and the different" (p. 242). Recognizing the obstacles objectivity, universality, and anonymity placed in the path of her own and her students' learning and seeing "a lack of fire in (her) classroom" (p. 243) she saw a need to change her methodology from one where the students completed exercises and passed tests to a more student-centered environment which made space for engagement, personal connections, sharing and voice.

# PART II.
# LIVING WITH OUR STUDENTS IN THE MIDDLE SPACE OF CURRICULUM

## .... The stories with no endings

Transcripts: (pp. 161 - 163)
M. I'm very fascinated with the whole topic of classroom climate which I'm starting to think of in terms of middle space. (laughter) How do you make a classroom conducive to learning? What are you doing as a teacher that makes it possible for children to learn? How do you set the stage?
D. I started out with the idea of a "facilitating structure" (yes) but I restoried it as the middle space. It started out with "The Jungle Gym of Learning." Did I tell you that story?
M. Are you going to write a book with all these stories of yours?
D. I'm going to write a dissertation.
L. It would be a wonderful book to read.
M. It would be a wonderful book to read while you're studying to become a teacher because it's all about the crucial part of teaching. Lesson planning, objectives, evaluation are all secondary.
D. But teachers don't talk about these things, you know. (yes) Teachers don't tell these stories because it puts them in a vulnerable position, shows them at a vulnerable time - at the moment of dilemma -- or in continuing dilemmas which they can't resolve. Most of my dilemmas aren't resolved and most of my

stories have no ending.

K. Vivian Paley does that quite nicely I think in some of her work doesn't she? (yes, she does) She's very honest.

A. I read one of her stories about a dilemma she was caught in because she didn't want to be seen to favour the girls over the boys. I can't remember the whole story but when I first read it, it really bothered me because she never came to any resolution. But since then it comes up with me again and again because it would be too easy to come to a resolution - there really isn't one.

Research Journal: I'm glad the topic of unresolved dilemmas has come up. We need to discuss the possibility that our stories of middle space will not lead to answers or resolutions. I don't want anyone to feel disappointed that after all of our discussions we have a story with no ending. I'm not going to search for a grand conclusion to this inquiry. What I am hoping is that we will hear multiple voices telling stories of middle space and that we will explore some issues that we see embedded within these stories and images. I'm also hoping that our dilemmas will cause us to think of ways we can restory our stories of school and ourselves as teachers.

D. I have another story to tell you, another dilemma I haven't resolved.

### .... Are the lights on?

D. *Who controls the space of school? Whose names are on the deed? Is any of this space mine, or am I only the guardian of this space I fill? As a person entrusted by society to assume control of the space named school, how much, if any, of this control or space can I release to others? On the other hand, if I want my students to assume ownership for their learning and regard school and education as relevant to their own lived experience, how much of their physical, cognitive, affective, creative and interpersonal space can I control? On each dimension I experience the dilemma. It is just a room. A big, nearly empty rectangular box, but it is painted yellow and blue. I am glad that the teacher who was here before me picked those colours. They are the same ones I had chosen myself for my old grade one room and they seem like a good omen sent to welcome me to grade three.*

*I can hardly wait. I love this week before school when everything is cleaned and shiny and I can begin to work my magic spell. In my imagination I am a fairy godmother with a magic wand, while in my room I am Cinderella before the ball. But I crave no sympathy nor prince to rescue me from my labours. I enjoy this work and am filled with satisfaction as I prepare this space* *and get ready to welcome those who will soon arrive. (laughter)*

*But even as I work, ambivalence fills my thoughts and I wonder if I am doing the right thing. Does my sense of ownership and identification with my classroom space, the world behind the classroom door, (Grumet, 1988, pp. 90, 91) exclude or include the students who will sojourn there this year? Some teachers in my school have been discussing the possibility that we need to leave our bulletin boards bare as a welcome to students to fill them with their own work, while others have speculated that any use of classroom space should be part of a democratic decision making process the children are involved in. Maybe they are right I think, as I look at all the empty spaces just waiting to be filled. Maybe I have claimed too much of this space for my own. Although in doubt and feeling troubled, I can not seem to make myself take their advice - not in September anyway, and not for the first day of school. I know that student's work will soon fill the room and flow out of the door onto the hallway walls, but on Monday when they walk through that classroom door I want them to feel that they have come to a special place.*

*Like I felt as a child when we got off of the train in Medicine Hat in the middle of the night and made our sleepy way to grandma and grandpa's house. Always expecting to find them in bed, and surprised each time to see all of the lights on - my grandfather never left any lights on and followed us patiently around from room to room shutting them off during our whole visit. Surprised to be met on the front porch, even before we had the chance to ring the doorbell, by two fully dressed people who whisked us inside and sat us down to a magnificent midnight supper already laid out on the table before they took us downstairs, tucked us in to sinking soft beds made with turned-down patchwork quilts and lovingly turned out the lights.*

*And so I continue to work, not thinking that my time is being ill-spent, not worried that my things will soon come down to make way for the things made by my students, not caring that this moment will quickly pass; but happy that once again I have an opportunity to prepare a room to welcome them, to make arrangements in anticipation of rearrangements, to provide a space where they will feel both welcome and at home. Happy that as they walk through the door they will now I was waiting for them to come into the space called school. Happy that they will know that even though I knew better, I cared enough to leave the lights on.*

D. For me, knowing how to live together with the children in my classroom in a way that allows the students and I to share the middle space has been a continuing struggle. When Anne told us the story about Terry, and said the classroom was hers, not Terry's, I identified in her dilemma an issue I have never resolved, one that needs to be renegotiated with each new class and with each student in those classes.

<ins>Research Journal</ins>: But I also wonder, if the classroom is not my space, how

can it be the students' space? Doesn't it first have to be the teacher's space? Doesn't she have to be comfortable there before she can include the students? I don't know. I also wonder if this is connected to what you were saying, Lisa, about not having any space in your school. We are the teachers. If we're feeling this way in the school, doesn't it also affect our interactions with students and the middle space we can create with them in our classrooms?

Reflective Turn: I read a story that Vivian Gussin Paley wrote about a bird she encountered when she was out for a run one morning . In this story she says, if we can not experience or appreciate something as adults, if it's not part of who we are, or what we are, or what we've noticed, then it's impossible for us to pass it on to children. This makes me think that it would be hard for me to build a middle space with students, if I had not experienced one myself.

> In the matter of self we are not connected to one another by accumulations of skills and facts, but, rather, by inner fears and fantasies, impulsive urges and pleasures. That which every child feels we all feel; that which every child fears we all fear. The challenge is to uncover what we feel and fear and fantasize and desire, so we may proceed toward the understanding of another person.... Now, if we permit all these feelings to exist in every child, we will have taken our first step in acknowledging the child's self, for we will have searched into our own (Gussin Paley, 1991, pp. 155 - 156).

*Kelly's Reflection: Don't you think that we've often lost our connections to our childhood experiences? I think that as we grow up and come through the school system the adult mind (controlled by system objectives) closes down those childhood stories and we become so disconnected from them that perhaps we can't even remember the stories until we experience them again through the eyes of the children in our classroom.*

*Margaret's Reflection: The school I used to teach in had a quiet, hardly used library. If you did take your children in, they didn't say a word. But the library in the school I'm in now is a working library. People walk through it. It's not quiet but it's not noisy either. I remember the first few times I went in with my class. I was very careful about what my kids would say and do because I was still living under the old expectations and it was hard on them. Now I know what the expectations are and I know too that no one will say to me, "Your children are too noisy in the library." As an adult you are always aware of both the spoken and unspoken expectations. If these expectations are system centred* *rather than child centred, it takes a conscious effort on the part of the teacher to question the established routines.*

Transcripts: (pp. 110 -112)
M. I loved the story Debbie read to us last week. I thought about it a lot. (Me too.) In fact, I told it to my daughter and my husband on the way home from our last group meeting.
D. Which one?
M. The one about putting up the bulletin boards. Creating the space was like the welcoming lights, the beacon of welcome.

Research Journal: But for me, the question which was behind the writing of that story, still remains. I know I tried to create a welcoming space, but did it become a middle space for all the students or did it exclude them from entering into the middle space. Maybe I'm wondering if the creation of middle space can only be achieved collaboratively. I think this story and our conversations have helped me understand middle space as a constantly evolving construct with the part that I focus on in my story being just one of the many intertwining loops.

Reflective Turn: Bollnow's (1961) phenomenological description of lived-space starts from an understanding that humans are "at home" somewhere in the world. He uses the house as the reference point from which the spatial world of each person is constructed. Bollnow however, does not see these houses as the center of a man's space because they are not isolated but positioned in relation to other houses in the community and says that difficult as it may be to find it, "there is such a middle point of life-filled space which is no longer the space of the individual man, but of the group and ultimately of the nation to which he belongs" (p. 33).

Although we do not dwell alone, the home "remains the spatial center of the life of the individual" (p. 33) and separates inner space from outer space, sacred space from chaotic space. Its building calls for sacred rites symbolic of the creation of a world. However, even though the house offers security and peace and sanctuary to those who enter, much of life is lived in the outer space so there needs to be a link between the inner and outer space, "an opening in the wall of the house . . . a door by which he can leave and a window through which he can at least see the world outside" (p.35).

A road is required to move from inner to outer space and the form the road takes will open up space in very different ways as is seen in the images of highway and hiking path. Some roads invite speeding, some rambling and some loitering. Some whisk one by the landscape at a distance and some take one into the landscape. Bollnow cautions us however, that once roads are in place, "often after only a few days, no one strays from them without cause. All movements are executed in their network" (p.35).

Anne's Reflection: *I still struggle with the question of how to create a welcoming space too. I think what I do with the room before the students enter it however, does set a tone for our interactions. The middle space of a classroom is certainly a joint and creative effort by students and teacher, but I think usually the teacher has a pivotal role in its development.*

D. Do you think the creation of these welcoming and homey spaces in our classrooms have resulted because the majority of elementary school teachers are women?
L. Do you mean that, as women, we're driven to do that?
D. Well it's interesting to think about because there does seem to be a lot less emphasis on the decor of the room in the high schools where there are a lot more men than there are in the elementary schools.

Reflective Turn: As I reflect on this conversation, I am filled with ambiguity. I sense there is so much hidden behind the curtain which separates my private life from my public performance that I do not understand. Why am I at once uneasy about creating a homey space and not creating a homey space in school? What historical, cultural and gendered realities have intersected to create this ambivalence in my teaching practice? I want to share a story told by Madeleine Grumet (1988). I've read it over several times. It has not lessened the conflict I feel. It has not given me any answers. I share it now because it is the story I think about when I feel this way. It is a long story but I have only a little space so I will tell you only a little bit, and I have restoried even that. Maybe you will read it for yourself someday.

> *Grumet begins her story with a story. It is the story of a ritual transfer of sons from their mothers to their fathers in a special ceremony as the natural order is reversed in the Ndembu culture. As she tells this story she is struck by the*

*startling resemblance she sees between this Ndembu story and a story that is told in our culture. It is the story of school. And in this story we are witness to a ceremony which transfers our sons and our daughters to their fathers, to the patriarchy, to the public world. However, unlike the Ndembu story which permits no female presence in its telling, in our ceremony "we employ many women, even many mothers, as the very agents who deliver their children to the patriarchy" (p. 32).*

*In an quest to understand this patriarchal ritual, she searches for clues as to why the women who teach in our schools have allowed this to happen, why they have allowed the process of schooling to violate their own experiences of nurturance, why they have accepted this patriarchal objective as their own, why they continue to hand over their children? It is a long journey, this journey of understanding. In it she traces the parallel histories of society, schooling and motherhood. She looks at the construction of our gendered personalities. She is surprised when she finds that the "contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regimented authority, between women's dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling" (pp. 44 - 45).*

*She stops for awhile to tell us the story of the women she has met on her travels. Women who sought to gain independence from maternal authority. Women who left the interdependence of their sisters for dependence on their fathers. For in leaving their homes, their need for paternal approval (necessary for their presence in the world of work) increased to the extent that they became the accomplices of their fathers (who sought to extend their claim on all children through strategies of dominance and control). She tells of how in their desire to prove themselves fit to live and work in a man's world they willingly contributed their labor and their children to those very institutional and social organizations that have extended their own subordination, and contradicted their experiences of nurturance, emotionality, connection and relationship.*

*As she follows these women into the public world, the world of the father, she finds that rather than emulating "the continuous and extended relationship of a mother and her maturing child, they acquiesced to the graded schools . . . Rather than demand(ing) the extended relation that would bind*

> *them over time to individual children, they agreed to a large group instruction. . . Deprived of the classical education that most of the males who organized the schools enjoyed, (they) accepted the curriculum as bestowed, and deviations from it remained in the privacy of the classroom. . ." (p.55). Overwhelmed by the presence of their mothers, these women entered teaching in order to gain access to the power and prerogatives of their fathers" (p. 54) and to achieve this end, they did little to introduce the atmosphere of the home into the schools but instead became those who would draw children out of the family into the public world.*
>
> *No wonder their teaching practice alienated them from their experiences, their bodies, from the mothers of the children they teach, and from each other as they hide in silence rather than face themselves in the reflection of the other. If they hope to bridge the gap that divides the public from the private, and make school the middle space of mediation rather than the ceremonial site of separation they will have to begin to do the work of women, with women.* (Grumet, 1988. pp. 31 - 58)

L. Do you think it's that or the age of the kids?
M. Or maybe it's because they don't have their own rooms.
A. And even if the teacher is in one room, the students are moving through.
M. I don't think it would be as easy to create your own space when you teach over a hundred children. It's easier when you just teach your own class. (yes)
D. But is creating your own space the same as creating a middle space? Couldn't I as a high school teacher create a middle space with each group of students coming to my room?

Margaret's Reflection:: *I think middle space is partly the teacher's space. I'm coming to think of it as the middle of a Venn diagram. Picture the intersecting circles with middle space occurring in that place and time where the student, the teacher and world or curriculum intersect and connect to each other.*

L. When I was at a very small high school the classrooms tended to be more personal. They had only four classroom changes a day. You could walk into someone's room and say, "Yes, this is Jim's room." You could just tell Jim lived there (laughter, comments) with his students. By watching what the students did together, their interactions, you could tell that Jim was their teacher. And you could tell another room was Allison's space. She was very much like Greg. She had everything lined up, (laughter) all the books neatly stacked and all the pictures perfectly mounted and framed (laughter, comments).
D. My room tends to be very symmetrical. My friend Pat who taught beside me thought this was so funny. She's very artistic and can just put up random

arrangements of students' work that look just great. But when I tried to do this, it just looked like a mess (laughter). So I had everything all lined up. If there were three pictures on one side of the window you could be sure there would be three on other side if I had anything to do with it. Pat thought this was hilarious, but the only way I could get around it was to let the students or parents hang the work up. It might still bug me but I wouldn't risk hurting their feelings by changing it!

L. That's something interesting we can talk about too, about how our spaces are so different.

D. Since our spaces are so different on so many different dimensions, are our middle spaces equally unique? Or are there some qualities we would see as essential to the creation of a middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: The middle space shouldn't depend on the classroom decor. I think it is more dependent of qualities like respect for others, realistic goal-setting, patience, making an effort and enthusiasm. Because teachers differ in these qualities, the middle space they would be able to create with their students would also be unique.*

### .... Bending the curriculum to create a middle space

Research Journal: The curriculum we create in the middle space with our students will also be unique because it is constructed and reconstructed through our relationships with our students, through the knowing and re-knowing of our students. And in this knowing and re-knowing, we can develop the sensitivity which will enable us to construct a middle space which is sensitive to these students. Middle space and curriculum are not in the classroom before the students and teacher arrive. In the middle space the curriculum which is constructed is responsive and evolving, even as middle space is created in a responsive evolving curriculum. Each shape and are shaped by the other, even as we shape and are shaped by each.

Transcripts: (pp. 79 - 82)

K. I'd like to share a story about constructing curriculum which is sensitive to the child's home life, about knowing and re-knowing our students.

*Constructing curriculum: Sensitivity to the child's family life*

K. *One of the student teachers I'm advising had a very interesting lesson* *planned for her grade one class today. She had constructed a problem solving box as part of her social studies unit. Children were to write out problems they encountered and then the students were to all come up with possible solutions and bring these back to class for further discussion. But the solutions they shared were only to be worked out within their own families. They couldn't have a teacher or someone outside the family help them.*

*I thought that this might present a problem. Even in this particular school with its middle class kids in nice nuclear families, how do we know that this assignment would not be a problem? So, I talked to her about it afterwards and said that you never know really what's going on within some of these families. In the inner city school where I taught, I would never have done anything like that.*

M. You're loathe to take up the concept of family (absolutely) because you're often dealing with pain. (absolutely)

*Everything she did in the lesson, if you look at the timing, the questions, the extending would not have indicated any problem. All the expected components were there. But we had to talk about the actual content and the ethical issues arising out of her lesson which were not creating a very nice space for some of the children. I tried to get her to imagine how certain problems within the children's families might cause them to feel squished within the constraints of the lesson.*

D. How did she respond?

K. Really quite well. She'd had an excellent science lesson just prior to that one so we talked about the science lesson first of all and then we got onto the other lesson after that. I just felt that we really had to discuss it but I was extremely uncomfortable and she couldn't seem to see what I was talking about at first. (I wouldn't have). I don't think I would have either. I asked her how this activity was connected to the grade one social studies curriculum and where this particular idea had come from. She told me it was from a book she had read.

M. The content though, is certainly in the curriculum under the heading of "Me", and the subsection "Me and my family".

K. Except that I would hope this specific problem solving idea would not be suggested within the teacher's resource manual. But in any case, it turned out to be a good conversation because we got talking about curriculum and how sometimes even if a topic is included in the prescribed curriculum you have to bend it to make it comfortable for the children in your room. I was able to talk about a couple of similar experiences I had had in my thirteen years of teaching.

D. Have you ever wondered if some topics such as "the family" should be left out of the curriculum because of the discomfort they might cause some children?

M. No, I don't think references to families should be left out of school. This would just be one more division between the private world of home and the public world of school. By not speaking about certain things or by showing our discomfort when we address the reality of the lives of our students we will just contribute to the feelings of alienation some children already have in school. But I don't think a teacher should ever assign a problem that can only be solved within the confines of a family because there are some children whose families are the cause of their problems rather than the people who help them solve problems. Such as in the case of Christopher, a six year old boy, who is the most emotionally stable person in his family. He can't find answers within his family, he has to find them elsewhere. So you just have to be careful how you discuss things. You have to make sure the curriculum includes rather than excludes the students, even the students with differences.

K. That was the problem I had with this assignment. There was no space to accept the students' differences. It was so tightly scripted that the child could not go outside the family context to solve the problem by bringing in a teacher, or another adult or even another child. There was only one right way to do it. Now talk about being tight.....

L. (some overlapping talk) I find that interesting because within our health program there's been such a move lately to encourage children to talk over their problems with other people they may feel comfortable with like a counsellor, or an aunt or an uncle or a friend, or a friend's parent. (someone you trust) Yes, and the someone you trust can be anyone. But what really concerns me, is the unexamined stereotypes and prejudices that teachers often have. Last term, my third year education students were writing about what they saw as dilemmas of education. I couldn't believe their assumptions about single parent families. That they are the downfall of our society and (laughter, really) that the kids that come from these broken homes are just disasters. I said to them, "I'm from one."

M. They didn't use the term welfare mothers I hope?

L. Darn close, darn close. So Jill, my co-teacher, and I spent a lot of time talking about that, a lot of time. We told as many stories as we could to try to dispel these stereotypical images. And I kept repeating that I was in this category and I consider myself a fairly stable and well adjusted person.

M. You should also have brought up an example of an unstable person from a two parent family. (laughter, overlapping conversation, there are many) I think it's important to talk about families for that very reason. My definition of family has really changed because I have a sister who is gay and she is having a child with her partner. When we talk about families, I say they're the people that you live with and that you love and that's all I'll do. That's as close a definition as I'll give.

D. Several years ago when I was teaching grade one we were finding pictures of families. I didn't try to define a family for the children. I had them look at pictures of people I had torn out of magazines and tell me if they were families. They decided if there were just kids in the picture that was not a family. They decided that a group of adults who looked like they belonged to a company was not a family. Other than that, they thought every configuration I presented could be a family, and they constructed some interesting stories as they gave reasons for their decisions. So it wasn't me telling them. They constructed the definition from what they collaboratively knew families could be. I think they may have even tried some combinations just to see what I would say but I did not judge their examples of family as right or wrong. I am sure some of them came to appreciate the possibility that some very different configurations of people could be called a family.

Transcripts: (pp. 83 - 86)
K. Well speaking of changing behaviour, there's nothing like your own personal experience to get you to rethink some of your unexamined ideas. I think this is evident in your situation with your sister. That experience helped you reframe what you thought a family could be. And getting back to the student teacher, I was sensitive to the possible effects of what she was saying because of certain experiences in my own background. The classroom teacher, who was standing at the back of the room, didn't see any problem in her directions. So I had to step back for a moment and think about what I wanted to say because I didn't know whether I was moralizing. But there wasn't much time to reflect because I had to talk with her right away. So it did bother me a little to bring it up until I thought about the children back in that classroom, and then I thought well that's really the bottom line. Then I thought, If we can talk about this maybe she'll think about it for next time around.
M. I think that your sensitivity as a teacher grows as you get to know your class. She may not have known this could cause problems for some children because this was a class she was borrowing. But had she been with this class for awhile and got to know them personally, her assignment might have been structured differently or they might have been comfortable enough to say to her I can't get answers in my family. I can't.
K. We had talked about the differences between borrowing a class and having your own class and that's certainly part of it, but I still think there are teachers in the school who would have watched that situation and not seen any problem in what she did.
A. You're right. There are such different levels of sensitivity among teachers. Kelly's story just reminded me of a story about our school in La Ronge.

### *Constructing curriculum: Sensitivity to the child's cultural heritage*

A. *About half the population in the school in La Range is aboriginal so you would think we would have been fairly sensitive to cultural issues. But unfortunately this sensitivity wasn't always evident. I went into one classroom and couldn't believe what I saw although you've probably all seen the same thing at some time. There on the wall over the blackboard was an old set of* *numbers from one to twenty. Illustrating these numbers were pictures of cute little Indians with teepees and other things typically associated with Indian life. That this was up in a classroom where half of the students were Indians was almost unbelievable. Even if none of the students were native it shouldn't matter. It's still not appropriate to be this insensitive to the cultural stereotypes we are reinforcing through the images we present. Your story just reminded me of this incident, and I thought if you were going in to see a student teacher in that classroom you would need to discuss the issue of cultural sensitivity as well.*

D. Like Kelly said, I think it's often your own experiences that make you sensitive to these concerns. But reading a story like this or talking about the need to be sensitive to things that will make the child uncomfortable or decrease the middle space for that child in your classroom can also open your eyes to things you may never have considered.

Research Journal: Even if the children didn't show any outward emotions or verbalize their feelings this may be because they have walled off part of themselves in the school context. There may be stories they are not safe to tell because these stories set them apart as different from, not as good as those in the dominant culture. Let me tell you a short story.

D. *As the white daughter of white middle class parents born in Canada I never considered myself as other. Never, until grade six. We opened up our readers and began to read a story about Canadian pioneers. It was a fascinating story of hardship and endurance. As usual I read ahead. My only concern being that I would get caught on the wrong page. Suddenly I felt like I had been punched in the stomach. I couldn't believe the words I was reading. I reread them to make sure I hadn't misinterpreted them. Then I waited in dread for the rest of the class to catch up, for them to read these words too. I waited to be exposed, exposed as the descendant of Ukrainian people. Ukrainian people, who my reader said had lived in "dirty, mud hovels with their pigs and chickens."*

*I don't remember the rest of the morning. But I do remember running home as fast as I could at noon. I had to talk to my mom. I didn't want to talk to my dad. My Ukrainian lineage had been passed on through his side of the family. I wanted to protect him from the same hurt I had felt when I read these awful words. I thought of my wonderful grandparents, their soft beds, good food, wonderful gardens and beautiful flowers. I suddenly had a lot less trust that the world was a good place and that the things I learned in school were true. No one except my mom ever knew how I felt about this story, how one paragraph changed my image of myself and made me feel I had something which I had to hide. It's just been our secret . . . until now.*

Because of my own experience, I don't think I'm insensitive to my students' feelings. But I know that on more than one occasion I've become aware of something I've done which could have made the child feel less than acceptable or accepted in school. As soon as I've done it, I know I would never do the same thing again. Even looking back on my actions or words right at that moment I've wondered how I could have been so unaware of what I was doing or saying. The only explanation, and for me it doesn't justify what I may have done, is that I just haven't thought about the possibility for hurt in a particular situation before that moment. Unfortunately, the stories we so unquestioningly live by and are educated by socialize us for many such moments. There are so many things we've just never thought about, so many hurts we needlessly inflict. If we want to create a middle space, we will have to learn to tell and to live new stories.

A. Yes, for sure.
M. In a talk on racism that we heard from a professor from Ontario, my eyes were really opened as to how I'm culturally biased because of being raised in a European culture and perspective toward history. A black man in the audience spoke up and said in an attempt to make his teaching more inclusive he used examples of people of colour who had contributed to our culture. One example he gave was Pythagoras, an Egyptian, and the Pythagorean theory. That was the first time I'd heard that and it made me think there are probably a lot of examples that I could use to dispel the myth that all knowledge has come from the white man and I know none of them. So without being aware of what I've been doing, I have taught the white European view of the world.
L. But if you are aware of these concerns and you want to change some things, people look at you as if you're making a big deal out of nothing. I think of the grade five social studies curriculum where the history of Canada is presented from the perspective of the European explorers, who were male and white. The stories of the women and the native people are excluded or added to the periphery (in the margins) which is almost as harmful as not including them at all.
A. And there were a few people here first.
L. Yes, there were a few people here first, many people here first but if I bring it up most teachers will simply acknowledge it and then go right back to teaching the text. It will be dismissed as my eccentricity. "You know Lisa, she always goes on about women and minorities and the environment - all those things we wish we could just forget about . . ."

D. And there were also women who came with the men and women who were left in Europe, as well as those who were living here when the white men came. But our history is written as if these people didn't exist and when they are mentioned their stories are told from the perspectives of the European men, not from their own perspective.

L. Yes there were a lot of people all over and a lot went on that was not considered as part of the main story we like to tell about ourselves. (laughter, yes) But when you bring this up people wonder what you are talking about. They are so completely immersed in the authorized version that they think that anything that was excluded was not important enough to mention and can't understand that that attitude is also part of the problem.

K. Even if there aren't a lot of women or people from other cultures in a certain area, it is important to look at the reasons why there weren't. You can at least talk about the reasons why something is as it is, instead of letting it go by as a normal or natural state of affairs. You can ask why we don't have literature by black women in our courses. You can ask why some groups of people never get to tell their own stories in the authorized texts and why other people get to name their personal experience as the universal experience. In paintings you need to look at who was often painted? (Who sat there.) It is often the woman as object that you see. If we could talk about the fact that the men were the painters and question these things rather than accepting them without question we would become more sensitive to the experience of the other in history and in our classrooms. I think we need to make children, especially little children aware of these concerns because otherwise they will learn about the world from one perspective and in so doing, many of them will be excluded from full participation in the public world.

A. These attitudes sure creep in though, and you wonder where it comes from. I'll tell you a story.

*My three year old has already come to know some of the stories that order our world so invisibly. Since we are so conscious of these issues in our home and in our professional lives it is amazing that he has somehow picked these things up. One day the playschool group went to a fire station where all the firefighters were men. Shortly after that experience he had a little girl over to play and announced, "She's a girl. She can't play firefighter." I couldn't believe that he had picked this up. It was the absolute opposite of all the things that we were trying to (mmmhmm) promote and yet it creeps right in to their little social world. This was only playschool. You can't isolate them in an ivory box. You can't isolate your child and therefore they learn these cultural biases very early. Before you are even aware of what is happening they have come to see things through the eyes of the dominant culture.*

Transcripts: (pp. 208 - 217)

D. I've observed some students who appear to prefer doing worksheets to working at self-selected or centre activities too. It makes me wonder if they really are more comfortable or happy doing those worksheets or if something has already happened to them in school which has made them very insecure. Worksheets provide a certain amount of security. These students know they can handle it, the job is not too big and they're not too vulnerable. But I have to think there is something (I do too, Debbie) which has caused them to prefer worksheets. (yes) I can not believe that a child who has not had something miseducative occur in the learning environment would be happier sitting there doing a worksheet than at a centre activity. And yet I know I have had kids like you're describing too, (mmmhmm) ones who wanted to mass produce worksheets. I remember when we used to use many different reading series and thought we were being great teachers if we supplemented the regular program with extra readers and workbooks. The good kids didn't only get to do one reader and workbook they got to do two or three because they were such good readers and they could work so quickly. And I think their desire to do this, showed there was something the matter with what I had done or with what had been done to them even before they came to my room.

K. I thought about that too but I wondered whether that wasn't making a moral judgment because they were not doing what I expected. I think the home background of one child in particular predisposed her towards this positive attitude toward worksheets. From the time she was four - I talked to the mother and I was over at their house a fair bit - her older sister had been teaching her school so this became her image of school. She was very successful, but this was the way she functioned in school. Maybe if she had had a grade one teacher who had done something a little bit different and who did not consider the number of correctly completed worksheets a measure of success, then maybe her expectations of school would have changed. But certainly her home life and her grade one experience had prepared her for the role of a received knower. The structure within her home life which I observed in the way her mom interacted with her, was almost the same structure as a worksheet. It was just 'this is the way it is', there are certain rules, we play within these rules, everything is very predictable, no chaos, no room for creativity, and no marks for questioning.

L. So don't you think you're helping the child by giving her something else then? Because she's comfortable sitting passively in the classroom, you're going to let her keep doing this?

K. Lisa, you know, I struggled with that because I think that being social is an important part of being human so I tried to include her as much as possible. But then there were times when she had choices as well. So I still went with what I believed was right but I was questioning it all the time. She didn't like to stand at the front of the class and read something so I would do little things like suggest a book that she might want to read with a couple of other girls who liked presenting things in front of the class hoping they might haul her along. So I was, in a sense, manipulating, but I thought it was for her good and I would probably do the same thing again.

D. I still would question what kind of reward is built into doing workbooks. If it's not the teacher who's providing the encouragement, then you're saying it may be from home. It used to drive me crazy. When you talked about your dilemma, I could just see these kids in my past classes. They were often bright kids who were always finished their work. That was back in the days when I accepted there was basic curriculum we had to do. It was like taking our medicine. (yes) But after they had taken their medicine like good kids, and they usually did because they were so anxious to please me, I opened it up. At that point in time nobody opened things up, they just gave more worksheets! But while I still believed we had to follow the curriculum, I knew the students were capable of doing much more than this so I tried to get them to do their basic work very quickly. The faster we could get it done the better because then we could really start learning and doing important things. But it was hard to believe how many of the kids who were really bright just wanted more of the same. Can I have another workbook? Can I have some more worksheets? Do you have any? We'll even go back and do the old worksheets they would say, because I used to save the extras in case somebody new would come in. And they would be more content to sit there and redo a worksheet that they had done three months earlier than to go onto something challenging and new and (and risky) I couldn't stand it. Yes, and risky (bingo!) risky (risky)!

A. I'm sure I would have been that kind of student. We all had worksheets anyway so I didn't have (laughter) that option. But I could see that I would have been that way. Not wanting to take that risk because it's easier not to. I think it's probably mostly girls who are socialized that way. It's easier to please somebody in a predictable (mmmhmm) risk free (it's easier) environment (just easier).

K. Sort of like easy reading materials too. (yes) Lisa, you were talking last time about reading material and remarking on the parents who want their children to be reading novels if that's the level that they're at. I think though that even as adults we often read books 'below our reading level' because it's more relaxing. So maybe doing worksheets might be the child's way of slipping down into something comfortable. It's predictable and doesn't take a lot of energy. I don't know.

L. Of course the bright kids will want to do it because it is easy, whatever bright may be. It would have been a lot easier for me to do statistical research too. I would have shoved the numbers through the computer and written it up and said twelve people said yes, ten people said no.

A. Debbie, it would also have been easier to come up with your questions to begin with. The kind of person who likes to do worksheets is going to have a really hard time to think of new creative questions. I can see that being a hard thing for me to do too. The questions are under there somewhere but I'm just

not used to thinking in that way, and I think kids, the worksheet kids, are not used to thinking in that way or opening up and thinking creatively either.
D. Don't you think these stories speak to why it is so important that school becomes a middle space where it is safe for even the "worksheet kids" to become actively and personally involved in their own learning, to risk?

*Anne's Reflection*: *Yes! It doesn't get easier the longer you wait - the older you get - to risk, to question.*

D. I still feel that somehow as a society, we have allowed this to happen. We have set things up so that in many cases it is not only an acceptable option but a preferred way of being.
K. I thought about that when I noticed a bright little boy in grade one who wouldn't risk putting anything down on paper unless it was absolutely correct. He could write sentences but he wouldn't do it unless he knew that each word was spelled right. I wondered what spoken and unspoken expectations confined his learning.

## .... A space for middle space

Transcripts: (pp. 26 -30)
K. But even if we want to have something more interesting and relevant for the students to work at, if you don't have the space what can you do, hang them from the ceiling? I used to wonder where I would put all the things that I wanted the students to explore. I had to get rid of my couch which was a really nice snugly place for reading.
L. I'm in that position right now, too. I have a little room for big bodies.
M. I'm lucky my class has a loft even though I can't put anything up there but fun stuff. I can only fit in so many desks and tables and next year we're all going to have twenty-eight students.
L. It's not going to go down. If I were to stay I'd probably have over thirty and the grade five classes are at thirty-one and thirty-two.
M. We're capped at thirty.
L. It should be capped at twenty-one or twenty-two.
M. It's sad. It's sad because you hear teachers that get tired and get sick, and do programs much differently than they otherwise would. And what choice do they have? My writing program is very different if I have twenty-seven grade ones than it is if I have twenty grade ones. I just don't have the time. I can't get around to edit with seven extra kids and keep things running smoothly so I just don't do it. My spelling program also changes if I have large classes.
A. I've found that in kindergarten as well.
L. We're at twenty-six right now in our kindergarten.
A. Twenty-six. I'd be a basket case. We've been thinking how lucky our school division is when I hear the talk in this city because in northern Saskatchewan

some allowance is made for the fact that most of the kids are learning English as a second language so I've had small classes. In the farther northern communities I've had fourteen grade fours which was great. And in the class which was called our readiness class, a term that I'm embarrassed to say I've used, I had no more than fifteen students in any of my classes. A bit farther south I had a little bigger class of about twenty and in the town that we lived in before we came here, which is a lot further south, I've had up to twenty-five. The writing program and process in my classes changed dramatically depending on the numbers. I just couldn't get around to work with the larger numbers of students.

L. It's not just small or large classes either. It's also small or large schools. Our school has a population of over six hundred right now and I'm getting a sense that we're losing the child in that context. With six hundred children and fifty adults it becomes very much of a mob.

## PART III.

## THE PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM

The stories in this section raise questions about how the prescribed curriculum (directions set at the provincial and local school board level) affects our ability to create a middle space with our students and help us understand how middle space is constricted rather than created for both students and teachers when the curriculum is seen as something that exists apart from them, as something which can be delivered at a predesignated time. Dilemmas are shared in stories where teachers have chosen to depart from the well trodden pathways and go in search of some "middle space" on their own.

Transcripts: (p. 13)

D. After working on my research proposal for months,[2] you can imagine my surprise when I opened the paper and read the following words from our newly appointed Education Minister, Halvar Jonson.

> However, I also want to try to emphasize the pattern whereby

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[2] The experiences and reflections leading up to the proposal however, had actually been evolving for years, but I've only come to the full realization of the historical-biographical evolution of this question much after the fact.

> we, both at the provincial and at the local school board level, set policies and set directions but whereby the selection of methods, the flexibility OR THE SPACE (I guess that's a word that we use in education on occasion) to apply the most applicable method, the most applicable or most workable solution, to actually provide for the learning of students should be emphasized and left open to the professionals. (Russell, 1993).

Research Journal: My first reading of this article filled me with hope. Possibly because it was in the ATA (Alberta Teachers' Association) News, my professional newspaper, I was not reading with my usual degree of cynicism. It appeared that someone in government was actually talking about "space" in relation to teaching and speaking of teachers as professionals. But my second reading quickly revealed that nothing had changed. It was the status quo dressed up for an audience of teachers. In stating that the policies and directions (translated as curriculum and examinations) were still to be set apart from the school and the classroom, it made the phrase flexibility to "apply the most applicable method" almost meaningless. This "new vision" was certainly not going to facilitate the construction of a middle space, especially as the teacher's choice of method, the "most workable solution", would be closely monitored by increased achievement testing.

### .... Letting Go

Transcripts: (pp. 178 - 182)

*Lisa's Language Arts Story*

L. *I just had my first get together with a group of my grade sixes who had all finished reading Lord of the Flies. But this is a long story and I'd better start at the beginning. When I came to this class in January the teacher before me had finished one class novel study and various stories out of the reading series they were using. They had used a textbook and a workbook. She said I should do the next three novel studies.*

*I had never done a novel study with a whole class before. When I had last taught at the upper elementary level I had planned thematically and had used stories, individual books and poetry related to the theme we were working on. But the class sets of novels were there, so I began my first novel study in January thinking that I'd give it a good shot. The first novel we read was about the Yukon. We all started reading together but, of course, two of* *them took the book home and finished it in one night while four or five expressed that they were not at all interested in reading a book about the Yukon. Eventually, we all completed the book. The students did a fair amount of research and chose some activities they wanted to do with the book, but I really had a hard time with the whole experience.*

*In conjunction with this classroom experience, I had just finished reading a book, In the Middle, by Nancy Atwell (1986) who talked about creating spaces for reading and writing and shared what those spaces looked and sounded like in her classes. It sounded just wonderful. I learned so much from reading it, but even though I was not happy with the ways things were going and wanted to change I still had a hard time letting go of all the things that were expected of me in that school. All of the grade sixes were doing these four novel studies so, despite my misgivings, I ploughed on to the next novel. It was quite a juvenile novel and the students found it very simplistic. I didn't really like the message in it. Nevertheless, it was an approved book so I decided that we had better read it anyway. At least this time I decided that we were not going to try to read it altogether and I let the students read it as quickly or as slowly as they wanted to. But all of a sudden I realized that this was absurd, because when the students were having their quiet reading in the afternoon, four of them were reading Lord of the Flies, one was reading Anne Frank's Diary, and another was reading a book called Voyage of the Stella, which is an adult novel of a journey up the British Columbia coast, and here I was forcing them to read this Nelson dribble as the main component of their Language Learning program.*

*So we don't do those anymore. Now they are choosing what they will read and discuss. They're happy and so am I, but I'm still thinking, "Now how do I hang onto their learning? How am I going to know they're making sense of the novels they're reading and where's the backup for this that I know parents will want and that is very much expected in this school which is more of a skills oriented kind of place than a learning oriented kind of place?"*

A. Did you say that other grade six classrooms are all reading these novels as a class?

L. Yes, they do four novel studies. Actually most of them take at least two months to do each novel. It is painful.

*Anyway, to get back to my new dilemma (the issue of my accountability and being able to prove that students are learning), I decided that at lunch times (because that is sort of a nice comfortable long period of time when I don't have a lot of other things to worry about) any two people or more who have read a particular book can sign up for a discussion with me as long as they give me enough time to read the novel if I haven't already done so. So now I'm back to where I began this story.*

*On Thursday I sat down with three boys who had just finished reading*

*Lord of the Flies, and turned the tape recorder on so I would have the back up I needed. I didn't know how the discussion would go but, you know the part on the back of the book where it points out the themes to you, they didn't even need to read that part. They were talking a lot about social structure and power, about the different personalities of the boys who were leaders, about how they would prefer to be in this or that group because they liked the way this boy controlled or managed things or didn't control and manage things because he was more of a facilitating kind of leader. They talked about private versus public schools and how these boys likely behaved in a particular way because they had gone to a private school. As I listened to them talking over our cookies and hot chocolate I thought, I don't need to give them one single solitary stupid comprehension question to make sure they are really reading or to assess what they understand about this book.. They were so serious about it and their conversation overlapped just like the ones we have in our group. They supported each other and laughed together just like we do! I'll bring the tape for you to listen to next time, I should have brought it. They sound just like us and two of these boys were assessed by their previous teacher as being average or below average readers on their last report card .*

*Lisa's Reflection: When I discussed this with experience with my student teacher she said "but you don't want to let them cover too much this year because you don't want them to be bored next year." That brought back a conversation I had had years ago when I was doing my own student teaching. My co-operating teacher had said I couldn't use some activities that I had prepared for her grade one class because they were grade two activities. She said "we can't do grade two stuff because what will they do next year?" At that time I thought, what, I'm going to hold them back from doing something they are capable of doing because the teacher they go to next year won't have anything left for them to do?*

*Unfortunately, I didn't think this thought nearly loudly enough! Even though it was one of the most contradictory things I had ever heard, I just brushed over it until my student teacher made that remark to me yesterday. Now I can't quit wondering how we let ourselves become so externally controlled, when it should be the things that are happening inside the classroom with our students which should be guiding what we do and when we do it!*

*Anne's Reflection: I think this speaks to the prescribed curriculum and to a false division of learning into quantifiable bits. I have been in some situations where there was virtually no prescribed curriculum or at least no one to enforce it. In one school, my colleagues and I took advantage of this to create a really positive and exciting middle space. In another, we did not. So....there must be more.....Too much structure can be a negative factor for sure. (But making it freer does not guarantee improvement.)*

Research Journal: It is interesting how the stories that our students should not be working at a level different from (especially above) the prescribed curriculum or stories that they won't learn anything important if it is not planned by us (or worse yet which we can't immediately identify or measure) come to control the curriculum that is enacted in our classrooms. So many of us share a common story in which our job is often to slow learning down or to confine it to that which is easily identifiable and measurable yet most of the time we do not even question why we keep telling this same old story. We just accept it as a normal part of education and of school life.

Transcripts: (pp. 202 - 204)
L. Exactly. I said to my student teacher, when I mentioned I was worried about next year, I don't mean I'm worried about what they're going to have left to do next year. There's a library full of books. I'm worried about the social part of things and how they're going to be moving from class to class. They'll be with different teachers who won't know them very well and they'll be with kids they don't know very well - they've been in this group for seven years now and suddenly they're thrown into a new place, it's bigger and it's crowded and there are grade nines there (overlapping talk). And she said, yes, I can see where you're worried about the content things (laughter and exasperated sighs). It's funny how that's come up again. I don't want to ask her where that's coming from but it's like she can not think of school in any way other than content and prescribed curriculum.
A. It sounds like she's on the level of, well how do I know what level she's on but it sounds as if content is the only thing she is able to grasp and understand right now and caring about the students in any way other than how they are going to receive this content just isn't yet there. Hopefully that will come.
L. Yes (rather forlornly said).
A. She's still more on a technical level (yes) and hasn't considered the more ethical and empathetic aspects of teaching.
L. She said to me, "I know in my first year of teaching I'll go through the curriculum and I'll just try and plough through it!" And her message implied, "I'll be at the front trying to get this curriculum 'through' them until I feel more comfortable with it." And I thought why, why do you feel that that's what you have to do to get a handle on things?

Research Journal: It strikes me that a very powerful message to that effect is coming from somewhere. The idea that "getting through a curriculum" or "getting the curriculum through (or into) the students" is the most important thing a teacher does, therefore, that it must be what is looked after first, seems to be accepted as normal by most teachers. Other things the teacher does are seen as secondary to delivery of curriculum and are things which "teachers learn to do later".

A. Content is presented as so crucial and there does not seem to be any understanding that curriculum encompasses more than content.
L. Yes.
A. Maybe no one, and that seems hard to believe, but maybe no one in any of her classes has really delved into aspects of caring about students and the other aspects of teaching beside the content. Or maybe they have but she hasn't heard it because the message of content came through more loudly and clearly.

## .... Reading in the middle space

Transcripts: (pp. 208 - 217)
K. When I send books home with children for home reading, which is a fairly common practice, I make sure now that I provide an explanation to the parents as to how to read with their child so it will be an enjoyable activity. The first year when I started home reading, I hadn't done this and it had been an awful experience for some of the children. Parents kept saying, "Sound it out (mmmhmm) sound it out, don't look at the pictures!" (laughter) You must not look at the pictures (that's cheating) (laughter). Old habits die hard. Even when I did do an inservice on home reading some of them were stuck on the old ideas. They weren't going to change.
L. And these are educated people who think this way?
K. A lot of them, yes.
A. The woman who lives next door to me is a speech and language pathologist. She has a masters degree. Her little boy is in kindergarten and she's teaching him to read by sounding it out and I'm just trying not to say anything.
D. It is sad what people will do to the reading experience isn't it? (oh yes) Let me tell you a story.

*I've been reading to my grandson Nicolas since he was just born. He was only eight or nine months when I could already sense his involvement and excitement about books. I'd sit on the floor with him between my crossed legs and read to him. I could tell he knew some pages that he liked were coming because I could feel his little body get ready in anticipation for those pages.*

Research Journal: What a middle space that is! But maybe not so much different emotionally from the middle space in school. If we look at the relationship between caring and knowing, I think this image is an example of a middle space in which to learn.

*Now I have to phone him everyday and tell him the story of the Gingerbread Man. That's the story he just loves right now. The little old woman is in the house and she's cooking and the little old man is outside and he's working in the garden and feeding the chickens and the little old woman - putting her finger up to the side of her face, which he copies - goes hmmm, I wonder what I'll make today? He can just hardly wait for me to get to that part so he can say "A Cookie, A Cookie!" (laughter) We're calling long distance but I've got to tell him the whole story every day! The part he loves the most is that picture of the little old woman because I said look what she's doing, and I put my finger along side of my face and said hmmm! So now he puts his little finger on his face and just waits for that part. It's adorable and when I think about anybody spoiling that or dimming the excitement in his shining eyes I wish we didn't have to send him to school. My daughter, Christy, said this morning when she phoned that when he woke up at seven she changed him and put him back to bed with his books and she could hear him in his crib reading books for half an hour to himself and he's not two years old yet. Can you just imagine replacing that love, that involvement in his own learning, with prescribed curriculum? I'll just be furious.*

A. As kindergarten approaches I'm on tenterhooks too.
L. I learned how to read with a grandma like you. I learned to read really young. My grandma just very instinctively and very naturally knew children I guess and we read the same books over and over again (yes). I was read to until I was old. I was read to by my aunt until I was ten even though I could read. All of the things that we are finding today are good for kids, I think mothers and grandmothers have been doing for a long time, which is what I keep connecting back to.

Research Journal: And isn't this what we are thinking about as the middle space, a space that does reach back into the home, the private self of the child, and extend it into the school rather than cut it off as the child is transported into the public realm.

It's interesting though, because until just recently in my university experience I have been made to feel very uncomfortable if I told stories from my own classroom because they have often been disregarded and discounted in the abstract discussions which take place there. This has seemed very contradictory to me as it seems that the stories of school must be told in the universities and I have been determined to say the "school word" even when I felt that I was treated in a rather condescending manner for doing so. But just now when I told the story of Nicolas, I also felt that it was a "little out of place" in the story of school that we are telling! Even as I typed it I thought it would be one of the parts that I would delete or definitely not refer to, or comment on, because it was not "really part of the work" we were doing and that I had in some way introduced something into a context or professional knowledge landscape in which it did not belong. I'm amazed at my thinking! Here I am on one hand wanting to bring my stories of school into the university and to construct a middle space where the child can bring what is private and personal to the public space of school and on the other hand I am confronted with a feeling that stories from "the home" should be left out of this conversation. No wonder the walls are so hard to tear down. Is this a feminist issue? Yes I think it is. The home which symbolizes the private and which houses the women and little children is not yet welcomed into the public realm where the men control the discourse. I thought this was something that "they" did only to find that when I am unaware I am controlled by a way of thinking not my own. I have been socialized and educated to think like "they do". Oh woe am I, most wretched of all creatures, a woman, a mother and a grandmother with no rocking chair and no story of my own to tell.

*Anne's Reflection:* *I'm so glad you wrote this in, Debbie. I grapple with these issues so often. Again, self-concept, is tied in here so inextricably.*

L. We did a lot of echo reading and no one ever made me do a word alone and I wasn't made to feel that I couldn't get it. We would read together and we would sing. Our reading was singing together. So reading was wonderful for me. (mmmhmm) And to think, I was taught by my now eighty year old grandma who didn't have a single course (laughter) just a lot of love. (pause) That's what it's really all about. One of the best things I hear when parents come in, and a lot of them are saying it right now, is my child never used to read but now she or he races home after school to read. Or they say, I had to drag them away for supper and they raced back down to read again. But then they say to me in the same breath, we're still wondering why they're not getting any homework. They love to read and write in my class, and if by the end of this

year a child can say to me I really love reading, it's something that's an important part of my life now, what more can I want?
A. So how can we say then, that this philosophy which we seem to all share here is not the right one? (hysterical laughter)

Anne's Reflection: *I love it!*

D. I know. That's why I brought that question up. I am convinced I have the right philosophy, but I just wondered if it was really fair that I'm doing this research on middle space which is in a way promoting my own philosophy?

Anne's Reflection: *I think the basic tenets we seem all to support - respect for the child and the teacher, for example, are pretty hard to argue with. I don't know if we are saying we're hardline in promoting one particular methodology.*

K. I can understand that. That would be something I would be asking myself too, Debbie. (laughter)

### .... The worksheet teachers

L. I hear teachers at our staff room table talking about things like that, questioning what they're doing, questioning what they've done. But they go back and do the same thing. It's risky and it's hard to change. It's hard when parents are coming in and saying we expect things to be a certain way. It's hard to go with what you know (mmmhmm) and when you do question something to start acting on that and to start living that out. They question all the time. One woman in particular who I taught with in grade one a few years ago, a worksheet kind of person, asks all kinds of questions in the staff room. It's almost like she is talking to herself. Now she's wondering about portfolios and the notion of grading and what we do to kids when we put a number on their learning. She says that kids should have a voice in what they're learning and in assessing where they are in their learning, but then she goes back to her classroom and fills in the A,B,C, or D, because it's too hard to change. The space isn't there to change.
D. I wonder if sometimes the space is there, but they're scared about how they're going to fill it.

Anne's Reflection: *This is really true. If you learn not to take a risk as a child with a workbook in front of you, how much harder it is to take risks as an adult.*

Research Journal: I've heard teachers ask, if you don't do workbooks, what are you going to do? They are panic stricken at the thought of not having something ready made, structured and predictable to do. (Or they are worried that they will miss things, that there will be holes in the content!) Yes, they're worried about that but many of them are simply worried about how they would fill in the time. They can't imagine what happens when you let children enter into their own learning, how you don't have to worry about filling in time! When the bells ring in my room I'm always surprised. I'm never sitting there waiting for a bell to ring because I've run out of work for the students to do. And I'm sure the kids aren't either. It's interesting, but after the kids have worked with me for awhile and understand how I see teaching and learning, if I do the "traditional teacher thing" and deliver the content, they sit with amused looks on their faces and I can tell they are just humouring me along. Some students are so perceptive that they make it almost impossible for me to play this role convincingly! Let me tell you a story about this.

### .... A matter of trust

*D. It was not until my second year as a grade three teacher, that I felt ready to adjust the social studies curriculum to a learning experience which was less controlled by external demands and more inclusive of the students in my room. I could not blame the curriculum guide for this hesitancy on my part, as it was in fact very much written as an invitation to personalize instruction even though I did not initially perceive it as such. I was also unable to hide behind the mantle of beginning teacher, as I had taught grade one for many years before this change in grade levels and had not only put my signature on the curriculum at that grade but had consciously worked to make space for the signatures of my students as well. I knew that children needed to accept responsibility for their own learning and I trusted them to be actively involved in the educational process. My grade three class reflected this knowing except for social studies which stood in sharp contrast to the rest of the day.*

*I often said to those others who wanted to observe me teach that they would have to follow me a long time if they wanted to see a traditional lesson, until that first year of teaching grade three social studies that is. Because other than on the first day of school when I filled so much of the available time and space with my agenda, one in actual fact often imposed on me, and with my talking, which even I got tired of listening to, I tried to avoid centre stage. Stand and deliver was not my style. So when on the rare occasion, I took to the podium to dispense knowledge or more likely instructions for a field trip or school assembly where our behaviour would either elevate or destroy my reputation as a teacher in control of her class, I would feel the amused or amazed reaction of those students who knew me so well. Even as I write,* *Aaron's knowing smile still taunts me as it made this role especially hard for me to play convincingly the year he was in my room. While at the same time, it also fills my heart with affection for him and for those other students who knew our collaborative relationship in such a way that they were able to intuitively understand my dilemma and silently agree to play parts in this unwritten script of school which were as out of character for them as mine was for me. But I digress.*

*As that first year in grade three ended and I began to write reports, clean files and order supplies, I also began to reflect on my class and on my teaching as much to achieve a sense of closure as to make plans for the coming year. Initial thoughts and images brought a sense of joy to me, even as they brought with them the realization that I was holding some images and feelings at bay. Perhaps a question I had been avoiding? While not new to my life as a teacher, I realized that this act of reflection was something I had increasingly resisted as the year went on. Teaching a new grade was just so demanding, I rationalized. But I was not satisfied, and probing further I was soon able to identify the social studies curriculum as a possible source of discomfort even though I could not yet identify what it was in my social studies program that caused this tension. I knew that I had been very uncomfortable with my role as a teacher in this program and that as a consequence of this I had often avoided teaching social studies and instead had the kids doing science which we all loved. Nevertheless, I entered summer holidays with a strong resolve to "work on social studies for next year" and to that end I carted home the curriculum guide, teacher resource manuals, required and supplementary texts, as well as information from other subject areas as I initially thought that some sort of curricular integration might solve my dilemma. I did after all have this picture of myself standing at the front of the room dispensing information and directing almost thirty students through identical problem solving activities to exorcise if I was to restore to myself an image of teacher with whom I could co-exist.*

*I annoyed my whole family that summer. I had not created such a disruption in our midst since the first days of my teaching when in a genuine but misguided effort to individualize instruction, I had messed up our home with hundreds, no thousands of pieces of personally coloured, cut, coded, and laminated centre activities although the two years when I had them all help me colour hundreds of big books can never be entirely forgiven or forgotten. These, however, had at least produced some concrete materials to which we could all look upon as evidence of our time and labor. Not so with my labour to improve social studies. This was basically work in the abstract although to make the connections I sought, I had the living room and dining room literally buried under stacks of books and papers. I did not want them moved, even though I would neglect them for days at a time, unable to accomplish whatever it was I thought I wanted to do and wishing I had never undertaken this oath of improvement yet unable to give up until time gained control and September mercifully arrived.*

*The first day back at school I did not teach social studies. Actually I did not teach much of anything as my "normal" first day routines once more expanded to fill all available time and space and pushed any thoughts of following a carefully prepared plan far from my mind. Although I did wonder why we felt compelled to write enough in our first day plans to fill several days and then to lament afterwards how slow these kids were compared to our group last year - who no matter how difficult they were would now be welcomed back with opened arms - and to further complain how we were already "getting behind". Furthermore, as well as being a player in this ritual, I was confident that social studies would not be neglected in my room this year because even after my attempts to integrate it into our collective grade three language learning themes had been given up in despair, one of my summer's accomplishments had been to block social studies and science into larger chunks of time with social studies taught in some months and science in others. Avoiding social studies for a month at a time was something not even I could do with a clear conscious I hoped, but to make sure I would be kept to my word I sent out a parents' newsletter that first day with my curricular intentions clearly spelled out. Imagine my shock then when the weekend came and my day plan accusingly pointed out that that same social studies lesson had been consistently pushed to the next day's plan. I spent two miserable days thinking about my failure.*

*Monday afternoon finally arrived. I had been on supervision and had not had the chance to review what I would say to open this unit on "Our Community: Past, Present, and Future." I considered extending a writing activity that had kept everyone excited that morning but the empty social studies bulletin board reproached me and I wondered what the parents would say on meet the teacher night when their children showed them around our room but could not answer any questions about what we were doing in social studies. I walked to the front of the room not knowing what I would say, not knowing if we would be doing writing or math, or perhaps just going for a nature walk! But someone's voice said, "Boys and girls I would like if we could start working on our first social studies topic this year. It's about Lacombe in the past, the present and the future. Do you think you could help me figure out how we can find out about what Lacombe was like in the past and imagine what it might be like in the future? What would you like to know about our town in the past? How do you think we can find these things out?"*

*Their enthusiasm was contagious. Every student had at least one question about the history of our town, everyone wanted to find something out. I was amazed at how quickly they came to own this inquiry and equally amazed when I looked at the charts full of questions after school and discovered all the major topic areas suggested in the teachers' resource manual had been suggested by the students. Their ownership continued as we brainstormed two chart pages full of ways to find out the answers to the questions that they had asked. I was pleasantly surprised at the thoughtful and original plans they devised for locating information and quite impressed with* *all they already knew about conducting such research. But my greatest surprise came when we started to work on the third set of charts because all at once it seemed to occur to them, that this was not going to be a mere academic exercise, some hypothetical plan to be filed away, but a real blueprint for our unit, a working plan of action. When I started to record who would do what, send them off to the phone to invite speakers and make plans for our community outings, and in front of their eyes develop a time line for action, they were simply incredulous. They could not believe that their questions and their plans were going to be taken seriously, that they would in fact become the source of our first social studies unit. Just as I could not believe that they had become so involved and enthusiastic without the belief that this was all for real. How could they have doubted me I wondered? How could I have doubted them I asked?*

## PART IV.

## WHAT DO WE VALUE?: TELLING STORIES OF EVALUATION

Many of our teaching stories focused on the ways in which standardized tests and student evaluation restricted our ability to create a middle space. These conversations and stories about what we, as teachers, value in our work with children often "unknowingly" spoke to those pervasive and underlying assumptions which posit teaching as delivery and learning as receiving rather than constructing knowledge. They spoke of those things which influence how we construct curriculum, evaluate learning, remediate deficiencies and label children in our schools. They spoke of our uncertainties and our dilemmas.

### .... Relationships in evaluation

What part do our relationships with our students play in creating the middle space? The same act on our part may enhance the middle space for one child and diminish it for another. There is no recipe for creating the middle space. It is constructed and reconstructed through our ongoing interactions and relationships and may in fact change for a particular student as other factors come into play. Middle space is a supportive space which is created over time as teachers and students form relationships and develop the embodied knowledge of what it means to be supported so they can be supportive of others in this space.

However, even when we understand that middle space is a supportive and responsive space, how we respond to the children in our classrooms is not always determined without personal or professional struggle. We face dilemmas as external expectations and even personal biases cause us to question our practices and to ask if we are being professionally responsible and doing the right things for our students when our responses are based on the needs of the individual student rather than on the needs of the system to prescribe, control and evaluate.

### .... What is a student's best work?

Transcripts: (pp. 47 - 50) *Lisa's story*

L. *I think the biggest issues I've been struggling with the last six weeks are centred around what is a student's best work and how I should respond to their work especially when I do not feel it meets that criterion. I hear so many people around me who are so clear about these issues. They will say a student's printing was terrible so they are making them redo it, and I think, wow, it must be easy for you to live when you are so clear in your mind as to what is right or wrong, or best or not best. Because for me it's a struggle. I think I should know that too, but I don't.*

*One of my students wrote a poem after a presentation we had in our class. It was sort of a paragraph poem, that she wrote after the speaker left. When she shared it with me, I thought this is great. We've got to do something with this. It needs to be posted or published. But as soon as I had this thought, I wondered what she would have to do to change this poem paragraph into a form that would more easily be recognized as poetry and which could be put into a poetry book. While I didn't want her to change any of the words, the teacher in me wanted her to make it look more like a poem. However, as I was thinking about this, I wondered if my suggestions to change her poem would be perceived as an unfavourable response even though I had initially responded to her work in a very positive way.*

M. I agree. Maybe this was not the time to be evaluating or teaching. Your willingness to stand back, wait a minute and question how your response might be felt by the student was more likely to create a middle space for the student than if you had done what some might see as your duty[3] as a teacher. Not that you should never evaluate student's work. But this student wrote a poem as a response to a speaker's presentation, and she would not have felt like she was in good company if your response to her poem had been evaluative. At another time, when your class is studying poetry or when you see that it is not going to be misinterpreted by this student, you can look at the different forms that poetry can take or talk about the differences and similarities between poetry and prose. It's not that you can never teach or evaluate what your students do, it's that the balance of trust between you and your students must be maintained if there is to be middle space.

L. But even in the matter of evaluation, I still don't always know what the right or the not right is.

A. I know what you mean. With somebody's writing, I feel like you do in that I am not that comfortable with saying it should be done like this or this. I will make suggestions and teach conventions but even with grade one students, I feel that the ultimate decision of what to include in a piece of writing lies with them and what they want to do. But then even as I say or think that, I'm also thinking about all these other things, like....

L. Exactly! What about the spelling or what about....

A. How are you going to get a mark for their writing?

M. Or how are they going to develop in their spelling (yes) or their use of language without being made aware of what is accepted? If we feel that their writing should not be the vehicle for doing this teaching, when will it be done? I think we have tried to integrate spelling into the writing process rather than teaching it in a separate time, but if we are now concerned that our response to children's writing should not be to correct their spelling or enrich their vocabularies when will they learn these skills? That is a dilemma.

L. In my class, I initially took the role as editor because the students had not done a lot of writing before I came at Christmas. I have them read their writing out loud to me to start with and in many cases I find they can hear their mistakes and can edit it on their own. But they don't always see what would make their writing clearer or more interesting. I know there are some teachers I teach with who sit down with a student and tell them what they should change, but I do not have this same sense of certainty and I am unwilling to impose my personal preferences on a student's work.

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[3] Noddings (1991), in contrasting interpersonal reasoning which is "open, flexible, and responsive" with "logico-mathematical reasoning that proceeds step by step according to a priori rules" (p. 158), can help us understand the dilemma the teacher faces in this and similar situations. If our thinking and actions are rule governed and our first commitment is to a particular outcome, we do not have to consider the effect our actions will have on the other person or on our relationship with the other person. But if our actions are embedded in an ethic of care, institutional goals are apt to conflict with interpersonal goals and our desire to respond to the needs of others. Noddings states, "Moral philosophy in the last two centuries has moved even further from analysis of actual situation and interrelatedness. Following Descartes and Kant, it has tried to develop a method (universalizability) that should enable any person - reasoning well and in solitude - to arrive at a conclusion that should be binding on any other agent using the same method. From this perspective, who we are, to whom we are connected, what our projects are, what our situation is - all are irrelevant" (p. 160).

M. Yes, but I don't think I made myself clear. When a child writes a poem as a response to a guest who has come in, that writing is not something that you're going to use to improve their writing with. You might want to work on writing which is done as part of a writing program, but not a response.

L. But I run across that type of response to student's work all the time.

M. Remember the little boy who asked me what I thought about his writing? (yes). He was saying, do you like this writing, do you like what I did? And I answered, "No, I don't." As I reflect on that experience, I wonder if it is a bit different because I was talking about my response and not about the work.

K. I think we have to be careful though because the last thing we would want would be to have honesty mandated. The way you responded may not be the way I would respond, and we would both respond differently to different children and even to the same child at different times. But as long as it's authentic then, I think children will know we are being honest.

M. Yes, you're right. I would not say that to a child if I had not said a lot of positive things about his or her work on other occasions. The first comment that I make about a child's work is not going to be, no I don't like it.

D. But in that instance there was also more involved than a response to a piece of work, wasn't there? (Mmmhmm, yes.) He was trying to push the boundaries and find out what he could get away with. From what you told us, I think there were a lot of underlying messages. (Yes. Mmmhmm) His work was put out as a way to get some of the rest of it sorted out in his mind.

M. This is interesting. A really good friend of mine who teaches grade five in our school did a buddy activity with my grade one - two class today. Both classes were in my room writing invitations to the trustees because we're having an authors' fair at our school in a couple of weeks. The grade one and twos were doing one part and the grade fives were doing another part of the invitations. As I looked at the part done by the grade five student I thought, this is terrible. I can hardly read it. I was almost ready to ask him to do it again when I thought, I don't know, I really don't know. So I waited until the students were out of earshot and I motioned my friend over. She said, "Oh, that's really good for him." (laughter) And I thought (laughs) it's a good thing I didn't say anything. I could have crushed him. (laughter, mmmhmm) So, I'm not so sure knowing what is good and what is not so good is enough.

L. You're right! Knowing the child and him knowing you were far more important in that situation than knowing the acceptable standard.

A. Although it wouldn't be something that I would chose, maybe redoing the printing would have been an appropriate activity for that child if he had truly done a slipshod job. But if it was his best work, he'd be redoing it for nothing.

M. On the other hand it could have been a child who was in a power struggle with the teacher....

A. Yes, and in that case he may have deliberately tried not to do his best work.

D. The whole notion of what is a child's best work is also interesting. I have had parents who asked me why I was letting their child get away with doing sloppy work (oh yes, absolutely) and who have showed me an example of the child's printing which was done at home. The difference can be quite remarkable, and I've agreed with the parents that the child can meticulously print out one readable page. But if this student finds printing very difficult and tends to avoid writing because of this, what am I going to pick to focus on if he has just written a story? Maybe printing is the last thing I'm going to focus on in a certain case, whereas, it's often the first thing that parents see in their children's work. I may be overjoyed that the student who usually writes only one or two sentences has written a whole story, and the last thing I want to do is make him reprint it.

L. And don't forget, if you were sitting down beside him for three-quarters of an hour, he'd probably do the same thing that he had done at home with his parents sitting down beside him for three-quarters of an hour. (Yes) It's quite different when someone is saying (overlapping talk) . . . .

M. Make sure the "h" is as tall as the "t". (right, yes, mmmhmm, yes)

L. Or when you are teaching printing and say, "Class ready, we will all do h's now, all thirty-one of us. (mmmhmm) (Much laughter was heard during this reconstruction!) You're happy if you get thirty-one h's. (laughter) let alone if they are all perfect! ....

M. Space......Space! (hysterical laughter)

### *". . . .Space. . . .Space. . . ."*[4]

*Pick up your pencils*
*They heard me say*
*As we all started*
*Our printing today.*
*The lines are there*
*for you to use*
*Don't put those letters*
*Wherever you choose!*

*Start at the top*
*Then down you go*
*Back up half way*
*with the hump just so*
*Now do another "h"*
*Please watch how it's done*
*But you must leave a space*
*The size of your thumb*

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[4] Schroeder (1993) unpublished.

*The size of that space*
*Is important my dear*
*For without it your work*
*Will be crowded I fear.*
*Space! .... Space!*
*Rings out through the air*
*That I say it so often*
*Reflects my despair!*

Research Journal: Amidst these conflicts and dilemmas, how do we construct curriculum? How do we create a middle space in a public place which is constantly being subjected to external demands and shifting expectations?

### .... His hand in mine: The ties that bind[5]

Transcripts: (pp. 345 - 351)
M. Remember the little boy in my room, Christopher, who I talk about incessantly? (Yes) Well, he came to school yesterday and said, "I'm not going to be here this afternoon. I'm going to the doctor. But I'm not sick. I'm going to a doctor to talk about my worries and about what makes me so angry all of the time." Interestingly enough, this morning he wrote a letter to his dog on the computer. It said:

> Dear Cody,
>
> I love you. I will always love you because you are my dog. You are brown and white and belong to me and I will never sell you.

Christopher had two other dogs but when his parents split up they decided to give the dogs to his grandma who lived on a farm. They told him he could visit them all the time but his grandmother sold them. After he shared his writing with me, I said to him, "This is a wonderful piece of writing. How about if you photocopy it and give one copy to your mom and one to your dad." I thought if they read this, they'll know they shouldn't do anything with their other dog. They'll know they should let him keep it. You belong to me and I will never sell you. So then he asked me just before he went home, "Mrs. Allen would you like a photocopy of this too?" And I said "I'd love it." And he slips his hand into mine - all these things he doesn't do, he slips his hand into mine and he's sort of walking along, walking along. And he says, "Mrs. Allen." And I said, "Yes, Christopher." He said, "Nothing." I said, "Christopher, it's really nice of you to offer me a piece of your writing. How did you know that I would like it?" And he said, "Because it's the first piece of writing that I ever wrote on the computer and it's the first piece of writing I ever wrote about loving."

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[5] This story has also been told in chapter four. But as every storyteller knows some stories have to be told over and over again. The story teller doesn't choose those stories, they choose themselves.

### .... On the other side of the dividing line

Transcripts: (pp. 255 - 260: Lisa's Story)

*This is a good story. This is just one of them. In our school we have a math competency exam, the national math competency exam. The grade five and six students write it every year now. The school counsellor asked me to submit a list of the names of the students who would write it. The exam just stays in the school and the kids don't get the results. But they do get an award at the end of the year at the assembly. So I submitted my whole class list.*

*I wouldn't have asked any students to write it if I felt they were at the frustration level. I didn't want someone writing it and ending up in tears. But that would have been my only criterion for excluding anyone, and there wasn't one person in my class who I felt could not do the exam. I knew some would score very well and some probably not as well, but knowing them I thought they'd all want the chance to write it so I sent in my whole class list.*

*The counsellor gave the list back to me and said you can't submit that many names. You can't have that many good math students. I want just your top four math students. I had a difficult time, and I excluded many students who were doing excellent work in math, but I finally narrowed my list down to eight students. This was still not acceptable. So in desperation, I went back to their CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) scores because I thought maybe I would have to do some straight number crunching in order to select only the top four students. But when I looked at their CTBS scores all eight I had chosen had scored at least at the grade eight level in their math.*

K. Why, was there just so much space?
L. Well because they don't want to have to honour too many kids at the end of the year. (hysterical laughter and overlapping talk)

*Anne's Reflection: How about honouring all children?*

K. You know it would really make me angry if I had to do that Lisa. I wouldn't submit anybody's name then. I'd say they are all going or none. That's incredible (hysterical laughter overcomes us again....) (They don't want to honour too many people!)
D. I wonder what place competition has in a middle space? Can the middle space be a place of competition if only some of us can be honoured there?

Anne's Reflection: *I think competition is not necessary for learning to take place, not necessary for one to have a fulfilling life, hence not necessary in my classroom.*

Reflective Turn: *In Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education*, Catherine C. Lewis (1995) looks at the roots of the high academic achievement of Japan's students. Contrary to the belief that this achievement is the result of intense competition, Lewis has found that caring, supportive relationships characterize preschool and elementary education. She says, while American teachers also see friendship and belonging as central to children's growth, the school system as a whole, "curriculum, testing, grouping, discipline - is not designed with these goals at its heart. Indeed, it often erects formidable barriers for teachers who would make close, caring relationships central to school life" (p.2). Where American teachers are worried about test scores and accountability, Japanese teachers are talking "about whole children whose intellectual development can not be extricated from their social, emotional, and ethical development" (p.6), about how they can nurture the "bonding between the teacher's and children's hearts" (p. 56).

Lewis attributes the success of preschool and elementary education in Japan to the way in which each child, not just the brightest, comes to feel like a valued member of the school community. Competition is minimized and distinctions between students on the basis of ability or achievement are not permitted nor are children retained during elementary school. (The Japanese Ministry of Education provides no test scores or other indicators of achievement in its yearly educational report.) The importance of the process as well as the outcome of learning, the way teachers work to create a community of learners who support each other, the importance on reflection (hansei) as a way to assess their own learning and the opportunity to learn from mistakes (pp. 176 & 177), are all essential in Japanese education.

Lewis does not however, paint a perfect picture and explores several concerns, some of which I will mention because of their relevance to our ongoing understanding of the middle space. In Japan, all aspects of the education system operate under government regulation. A national curriculum and textbooks are prescribed by the Ministry of Education. "Every elementary student studies the same subjects for roughly the same number of hours per year, using similar or identical textbooks" (p. 11) and "the same content - often the same lesson - is taught to school children throughout Japan" (p. 196). That this does not sound like the story of middle space we have been constructing there is no doubt, but Lewis draws our attention to a paradox in this standardized curriculum. Although all students do the same lessons, these lessons are not constructed around rote memorization but involve the students' active participation in the construction of knowledge. Because of this, Lewis says this prescribed curriculum "supports and frees teachers to be more responsive to the individual thinking of the children they teach, because lesson plans highlight students' thinking" (p. 198). In further exploring the way this prescribed curriculum is enacted with the children, she draws our attention to the way the Japanese use the words wet and dry - *uetto* and *dora* - to speak about learning. "A 'dry' approach is rational, logical, unemotional; a 'wet' approach is personal, emotional, interpersonally complex" (p. 297). Lewis reports Japanese lessons engage children's personal interest, invite the emotional response, and involve them in collaboration with their peers. While this speaks to the middle space we have come to understand in our research, I still feel a lack of freedom to create a curriculum which is responsive to students' interests, problems and needs in this story, which I see as a concern for teachers who are trying to construct a middle space of curriculum with their students.

In Japanese schools, there is a very strong pressure for conformity although the curriculum is diverse and "includes many enrichment subjects," so "children are likely to find activities they excel at and enjoy" (p. 72). Nevertheless, they also teach the child to conform to the system and "undermine students' willingness to think and act as individuals" (p. 143) to the point that they feel very anxious about any differences from their peers. Therefore, although this Japanese story of elementary schooling raises the importance of some of the same issues that we have discussed and come to see as part of middle space or as barriers to creating middle space, I don't have the feeling that I could say, read this book, this book tells a story of the middle space of curriculum.

L. *Well we compromised and remember the counsellor is a colleague I've known for years. I know she probably thought to herself, Lisa we've done this for ten years. Just shut up and do it. Don't make an issue out of this. It's not a big deal. This is one millisecond of my day - and she does have a pretty big day. She spends a lot of time with kids and parents who really need someone to talk to, and her job is stressful, so in her long day this is just one little story. But it was a big one for me (for the kids too).*

D. Did they know about it?

L. *I hadn't said one single word to them except of course the other (overlapping talk) grade sixes said who's Mrs. Miller picked to write the exam from your class? So, one of the little guys came by and said, I know you haven't picked me because I'm dumb, I never get picked for these. . . .*

Research Journal: It seems a shame that in the desire to honour a few so many will be given the message that they are dumb.

*Anne's Reflection: Exactly!*

*Lisa's Reflection: This is the nature of singling out a few. It is so destructive to the rest. We do it as a profession with our excellence in teaching awards.*

*. . . . And he's actually one of the ones I probably would have chosen. He's just a fantastic problem solver. If I had to choose someone, he's the kind who I would lean toward because these are concepts they've never even heard of or seen before, so I guess I'd want someone who's kind of got that something I don't have, that third dimension of math.*

*Finally, I threw it out to them and I said I'm really sad that I could only choose four, and I really had a hard time with it, but who else would like to write the exam? We'll all write it in the classroom. So twelve of them said they wanted to write it. And of those who self-selected to write in the room, most scored higher than the kids who wrote the test in the other room.*

K. Oh we can talk about this, space, middle space. I'm going to be really blunt here. Frankly I don't care if your counsellor has big things happening in her day. I think what's happening in the children's day is what is the most important thing!

*Lisa's Reflection: But what is happening to teachers that they're losing sight of this?*

Research Journal: I do too, Kelly but sometimes I wonder if that often repeated sentence - *the children are the most important thing here* - is just a refrain we repeat to ourselves to keep our sanity. Because I often find it impossible to believe that this philosophy is what is directing our actions in schools, but repeating it over and over helps to cover up the discrepancy between our beliefs and our actions. Repeating it allows our actions to remain unexamined, our questions unasked.

K. This story tells me that your middle space is just about gone. I'd be really upset about this incident! I know you did your best to resist doing what you were asked to do, but your middle space to make professional decisions in that context does not exist.
L. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do without turning this into something that I'm going to throw up over and I can't do that to myself right now. If I was going to stay there any length of time, next year, at that first staff meeting I'd be saying, excuse me, those standardized tests that we're doing, I'd like to talk about them. We need to talk about this. But it was one of those things that caught me by surprise. They've always done it, and just threw it into my mailbox. I'm saying wait a minute and they're saying to me, Lisa you're only here for two more months. Be quiet and do it. This is how we've always done it. This is how we're always going to do it. So in my temporary position I just don't have any voice in anything like that.
D. What if you decided to stay?
L. There's no place for me to stay. (oh)
K. Could you stay? Would there ever be enough middle space for you to teach in? (no) How could a school which finds no problem in excluding children from writing a test because there will be too many students to honour at the end of the year, ever understand your need to talk about this!
M. Instead of rejoicing about the fact that it would take you three hours to acknowledge all the good math students.... (we fall apart here again)
L. I have a wonderful class. I have so much confidence in them, I'd encourage them to try anything. But it's all squashed for them too.
M. That's what I was asking you, (overlapping talk) because not only has your space been curtailed but so has the kids' perception of a middle space. (yes) The first three months that you're in school pretty much sets what you think is going to happen so when you came in after Christmas you would have had to deal with the students' already formed perceptions of middle space. It would have been different if you had come in and said, I'm not following any of these plans (yes). We're starting all over. But you weren't able to do that. You were expected to carry out someone else's plans.
L. And as I watch them, I see them reaching toward this space, but when they just about get there something pulls them back, either me or somebody else

around them. So I see a lot of brilliance popping up all over the place but it's got nowhere to go. Let me tell you a story.

### .... Opening up a green space in the middle

L. *Our school was trying to become a green school. In order to do this, we had to complete the required amount of environmental projects. Each class was supposed to pick two projects from a list which they would complete as a class. But when I looked at the list, the projects all seemed very superficial. I didn't think the activities would challenge my class or encourage them to become personally involved in understanding environmental concerns. So I threw out the list and said to the class, "It's your school, do you want to do this? Do you care about this, why, or why not? How would you see yourself being part of this?" So instead of doing activities chosen by someone else just so we could meet the requirement of having done forty projects, they've all chosen to do their own projects. Some of them are really amazing!*

*One of the boys is exploring the possibility of using solar energy in our school. He is the little guy I told you about earlier. The kids have really tormented him over the years. He ordered some solar panels that he's working and experimenting with. It was a huge job for him just to phone the store. I had to send another student with him to show him how to use the phonebook and phone. He didn't know how to look up a number. Now he is phoning every day asking about his solar panels. He brought in all the ones that he ordered and I gave him our school's electricity kit that's all neatly packed with wires and bulbs and circuits and all sorts of things to experiment with. They're playing with the overhead and these solar energy panels and creating circuits and finding out how much energy you need to light a light bulb, and how much you need to ring the doorbell and how much you're going to need for fluorescent lights. He's looking at where they would go and what kind of light the school would need. He's deciding if his panels should be outside with sunlight or inside. And I'm thinking to myself, if this isn't becoming environmentally aware and if that isn't science, then I don't know what is. But I've been given a list of projects to choose from, a curriculum to teach. And when I let everyone work on their own project, where's the test, where's the evidence that they have learned something?*

*I heard today that Kyle is now the guy with the goods. He's got all this neat stuff and he's surrounded by students (laughter, that's wonderful) asking and arguing about who is going to come over to his house after school, since his mom says he can only have two kids there each day. He's never had anyone his own age over in his life, in his entire life! No one even knows where he lives. They do the Kyle germs. They won't even go by his desk, if they touch anything he touches you know how kids do that stupid thing? Well it's all gone, and they're all wanting to be at Kyle's house now.*

M. That is wonderful now just before junior high, for all of them.

*I told my student teacher these stories. I said Jane, I can leave now. I mean talk about making the year for me! Academically these kids are not benefiting a lot from me. They're pretty brilliant in a lot of ways, and all I can do is get some things for them to get their hands on and make space for them to work. But the social part of things was something I really worried about especially with someone like him. After this, I can just go home as far as I'm concerned. But the administrators come in and evaluate me on how many elastics my kids are shooting, or how nice my bulletin boards are, or how my daily and yearly plans look and don't take time to hear one single story about Kyle.*

*Lisa's Reflection: Academics are really stressed at my school but I wonder about the definition of learning that is accepted and I wonder about everything else that's left in the dust. Kyle's story would not be valued. But the whole landscape of learning is important to me. The student's whole life is important to me.*

D. Lisa do you hear the attempts to shut down students and learning that are in your stories? It seems to me that instead of trying to open up a world of possibilities for the students, your school environment is putting ceilings there. There was a ceiling on how many people could achieve in math. There is a ceiling on how curriculum is being used. There is a ceiling on how much your students are allowed to talk.
L. They're all shut down.
D. Instead of using the prescribed curriculum as a jumping off point or a starting point it seems like it is viewed as something you must not go past. I'd be bumping into a lot of walls.
L. The electricity kits and the circuits are to be used in grade five. They are well equipped but I'm not supposed to have the circuit kit. So it's kind of like a conspiracy. Except in the open area I'm in, I can't shut my door and that is what I would need to do in order to create a middle space. Shut the doors, and pull down the blinds! If I could shut the door, we'd be rebelling left and right!

*Lisa's Reflection: Back to my notion of undercover.*

### .... But what are we measuring?

Transcripts: (pp. 26 - 30)
D. But when we do the tests and give the grades, I always think but what are we measuring?
A. Do you mean those tests that we were talking about last time?
D. Yes. Those tests that we were "measuring" last time.

M. Oh right! That's what we were discussing. (chorus of voices) That's why I blocked it out of my head. (laughter and overlapping talk)
L. We talked about standardized tests, right?
M. It's all coming back. We talked about the standardized tests and I was saying how this year we'd had an administrator who was concerned about our results. Not just school results, or classroom results, but right down to the individual child. He'd ask, "Why didn't this child do well? And why are there three in your class who didn't make the benchmark?" (laughs) I'm sorry, she has just moved here from Jamaica. (laughter) Of course, then I was annoyed at myself for appearing to justify something I don't think should be done to start with by providing him with an explanation. Oh, it was awful.
L. We just got our CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) results back. This school does CTBS testing every year for each grade.
M. We just do it in grade three.
L. Well, we just got all of ours back and let me tell you a story.

### *The scores must improve*

L. *Typically we do well. We're in the seventieth percentile nationally, and ninetieth in our division. (wow) I guess that's pretty good so when the marks come back it's usually celebration time. Except this time. The administration noticed immediately that we're only at the sixty-fifth percentile in research skills. Actually, it's even more specific than that, in dictionary and alphabetizing. This really surprised me because I've spent a lot of time in the library with my class and they are probably better at finding things in all of the reference material than any class I've ever seen. We've got a really great library and lots of ways to access information both inside and outside of the school and they seem capable of finding it all. From working with the students, I would say if anyone had good research and dictionary skills, they did. (But the test didn't know that!) I guess it didn't, nor did anyone ask me for my assessment so we're all expected to emphasize these skills now because we're only sixty-fifth and our scores must be improved.*

K. What happens to the space to construct curriculum now? What happens to the curriculum you and the students were creating? You can only be accountable for so many demands on your time and any time you add something, you take time away from something else. You have to cramp so you can cram!
L. And I got a graph of results for each child.
M. Oh, dear.
K. Yes. On each child. (pause) They really help you know children, don't they? A wonderful portrait of each individual child.... (laughter)
M. Good for grouping though. (yes, yes) You can sort out all the ones whose, whose..... (much laughter)
D. You can meet needs they never knew they had.

M. That's right. Nor did you. (more laughter)

L. Or you can decide that you can't meet their needs and send them to somebody else. I mean, that's what that kind of testing is for. We've got two classes of special education children, not special needs because they're learning disabled so they get sent to the learning lab. But there are six or seven special education children at each grade level. If a student scores low enough on those tests then you can send them into that room.

A. That's full time?

L. Yes.

L. They're supposed to be integrated but it really varies. Each child is integrated a little differently but probably seventy percent of their time is spent there. (mmhmm). And these tests are how they measure if the child is in that classroom or not.

K. It's interesting how the labels change but the spaces don't. (it's bizarre) You know, learning lab now, resource room before. ( I know). (laughter)

L. No, we have a resource room too.

K. Oh. Okay.

M. And who is the resource room for? (laughter)

L. Oh, the ones that are only here on the test. You know. If everyone else is here.

A. Short term pullouts?

L. The short terms, the injection kind. (Yes, the quick fix, right)

M. So resource means you just need a little extra help, but the learning lab means you need to really need to study learning? (Yes, laughter)

D. What do you do in the rest of the school?

L. What do we do? Oh we teach the curriculum! Actually, in our school, students who get into the learning lab are lucky because they do a lot of writing and a lot of talking and although their physical space is really small, they have a lot more room to move than we do! The kids do a lot, there's a lot of doing going on in there. But as soon as you get out of the learning lab, that kind of doing sort of fades away.

### .... Report Cards: Telling stories on our students

Transcripts: (pp. 208 - 217)

A. I think as well as being sensitive to the child's home life, we have to be sensitive to ways the home and parents dictate the stories that can be told in school. My three year old son Thomas has a friend who is also three and from watching them play, I can just see her becoming a worksheet kid. Her mom does worksheet like things with her at home, and she's really rewarded for that kind of thing, so I can see when she gets to school that is what she will feel comfortable doing. Whereas, Thomas is not at all that way, probably he's going to be too much the other way. He wants to direct his own activities.

D. I wonder if this is the start of parents' idea that they have to have marks on the report card? It took us a long time to get our report cards changed so that we didn't have to give marks in grades one to three although in reality we had corresponding numbers, one to five, that stood for the letter grades we were no longer using. Then for a short time we switched to an anecdotal report card with no letter grades or numbers at all. When the parents came in for the first parent teacher interviews after this had been done, we were supposed to talk to them about their perceptions and ask them how they liked this new format. You would be amazed at the number of parents who loved all the information. They found out so much more about their child than they had ever known before. (but) But after all the things the positive things they said (like how much I knew about their child, how much they found out about their child, how my comments helped them understand what their child could do or what he or she still needed to work on) there were hardly any parents who didn't still want marks (grades) put on their child's report card.

L. I think it's the worksheet adults that we have to worry about, as much as the worksheet children.

A. Except that's where it starts (yes)

D. It starts in society and in the home, and it is a story that has more than nine lives!

Transcripts: (pp. 35 - 40)

L. I think that when I do report cards, the notion of middle space hits me the hardest. When you have tried to create a space and allowed the children to create that space, and then suddenly you've got to give an A,B,C, or D and prove what that A,B,C, or D corresponds to on a number system; it creates one of the biggest dilemmas a teacher has to live with and it robs both the teacher and the students of middle space.

M. But there are always ways around that.

L. Only to some degree and it's not easy.

K. What are some ways around it?

M. (Laugh) Well, I think for one thing, if your relationship with your students' parents is good it is a little easier to get them to see beyond the marks. But if you only talk to parents at the conference time, it's much more difficult. If they're aware on an ongoing basis how their child is doing, I think the grades on the report card have less impact.

L. And by trying to take the emphasis off that A,B,C, and D in your classroom, so even if it's there when the report card goes home, it might not be as critical as it would have been at one time. For some people.

M. I also find if I focus my talking on the child's progress rather than just on where they are at this point in time it helps. Because really, that A,B,C, or D is just that, one point in time. But I know grades are still considered very important. When I went to school I know I'd look down the A column first. If we remove the letter grade, kids and parents look down the excellent column.

D. Yes. It's still counting.

M. It's the same thing. I got six excellents. My mom said if I got eight excellents

she'd take me out for dinner. So what's the difference? (pause)
D. This conversation made me think of a story. Just another dilemma I've never resolved.

### .... In Flanders' Fields[6]

*D. As I took down the October calendar I felt a familiar knot beginning to tighten in my stomach. We had already been in school for two months; two months in which I had come to know my students and many of their parents more personally; two months in which I had witnessed a broad spectrum of development, talent and learning in my classroom; two months in which I had planned, taught, guided, observed, collected, recorded and assessed in that continuous, informal and individually responsive act known as teaching; two happy and productive months.*

*But be that as it may, it was now the time of year for reporting! Contextually relevant and meaningful activities had to be suspended or at least drastically interrupted. Parents who had become an integral part of our classroom life had to literally move to the back of the room. Students who had built supportive and collaborative partnerships had to be separated. The ethic of cooperation and collaboration had to be replaced with one of competition and isolation. Teaching and learning had to make way for testing and sorting. Caring and helping had to be renamed cheating and marking. All that we had worked so hard to establish and nurture had to be ended so that I could begin the formal task of collecting, analyzing, and evaluating the information thought necessary to produce my report cards. Report cards that would supposedly capture and reflect all of the child's curricular progress, individual achievement, natural ability, observable efforts, class placement and future prognosis between the closely spaced lines and within the tightly boxed spaces which had been provided for my participation in this ritualized event. Was it any wonder then, that the November calendar display with its rows of white crosses, marked more than Remembrance Day for me?*

*Not only was I about to radically disrupt and possibly permanently fracture the life of this learning community, I was going to do it despite the fact that I knew that all of the testing I was about to begin was both unnecessary and indefensible. Why then, was I once more ready to embark on this flawed and fraudulent course of action? I already had much more knowledge of each child's progress and problems than any test was going to reveal. Furthermore, I knew that if the tests failed to confirm what I did know, I would use my previous knowledge and not the test scores as the basis for my reporting anyway, telling parents and myself that the test had been too hard or too easy, that the student must have had a bad day, or worse yet managed to copy*

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[6] Schroeder shared this story with a group of teachers she worked with to prepare a special edition of the Early Childhood Education Journal (1993) on the topic of authentic assessment. It was published in that special edition under the title of "The Rhythm of Teaching: A Story of Disconnection."

*some other student's answers. So why was I about to play this game of testing one more time? There had to be a better way, a way in which I would not discount my own knowledge and put our classroom community at risk, a way in which students and parents could be involved, a way in which learning and assessment could be integrated, a way in which a more genuine picture of student progress could be painted.....*

*I started to staple the poppies between the rows.*

M. You know that happens with me every time I give a diagnostic reading test. I can tell from my gut what reading strategies they're using. I know before I give the test how they will do. But I give them the reading test and I go, "Yup, I was right!" (laughter) And that's all I do with it. Every time.

*Margaret's Reflection: Whose space are we really creating, the child's or ours? Do we make ourselves feel better by knowing our professional judgment was the same as the test, therefore we can justify it?*

D. And if you were wrong what do you do?
M. Oh, I think he must have had a bad day. (yes)
L. Or he wasn't reading very well, or there were some words in there that he hasn't had.
D. Or it was an uninteresting topic.
M. Or the questions were poorly worded, is mine. (yes, mmhmm, much laughing)
K. It's even more difficult when the reading specialist comes into the school from outside and you just know that what's happening doesn't make a whole lot of sense because those little children have a lot of difficulty going into a strange room with somebody else, a big person that they don't know. I can just imagine what they must feel like sitting in the room. We know what they're capable of, but that person doesn't. So you find yourself making excuses for the child to the specialist, "Well, this and this was happening in his life right now..."
L. That's why you wouldn't be allowed to give the test. You're biased! You're on the child's side!
K. Yes, of course. Yes, I know that.
A. These are things that show up in the community I was in, where the students didn't speak English and the specialist would come in from outside not speaking their language and they would have to go off into this room to be tested. They were totally terrified and didn't even know why this was happening because you couldn't even really explain why they were going with this strange man to do whatever test it was.
M. It comes down to the fact that we don't really know, we do in our hearts, but we don't really believe that what we're saying is true. We do the reading test just in case. Then if somebody asks us to justify our knowledge, if one of the parents is saying I want to know, I can say here you go. Here's the test. Even

though I know that I have biased those test marks as much as the next person. At some point I'd like to have enough middle space as a professional to be able to stand up and say you have to believe me. Because I'm the teacher and I'm right. (laughter). I live in relationship with these children in this classroom and I can tell you much more than you will find out from looking a test, or a grade on a report card. I find when I have parents in my class they leave saying, "I learned something today. I can see what my child is learning."

L. And maybe that's where we need to begin.

D. But for me, quite often what parents are expecting of us and of education doesn't fit. On one hand parents are saying they want their children to be the kind of adults who can cope with all the changes that are part of our modern life, to be critical thinkers; and yet juxtaposed with those expectations is the notion that if we just get back to the basics this learning will occur. They are sending out contradictory messages and they don't even seem to understand how one thing does not equate with the other.

M. That's because they still have a foot in the old camp. Because for them success is being in the top five percent in the class. That's what they were rewarded for and for them that's what being a good student means. It's not being creative, it's not doing your best, it's not being able to work co-operatively with others, it's not solving real problems, it's being in the top five percent. And either they were in a position of being there and they want their child to be in the same position, or they weren't and they want their child to be there.

D. But there never seems to be any question about what their child has to know to be in the top five percent or how valuable that knowledge is.

M. That's why I like to knock that mystique out of grades and marks. I like to say to the parents of kids who do well on tests, "You realize that your child is doing well on this type of test. This is the knowledge which this test is measuring."

D. Some very specific knowledge which may or may not be important.

K. But it will probably be important in terms of how well they will do in the school and university context. If they are good at that kind of knowledge, of giving back facts, then they are going to do well in school. I was good at that kind of knowledge, that's why I could go to university. The other stuff was not important in getting a formal education and is left behind, cut off from the schooling process. I hope after that after I'm done, I can have it back.

### .... Creating a middle space for students in the parent teacher conference

Transcripts: (pp. 52 -55).

L. I have had children attend parent teacher conferences. On one occasion, I had not had a very positive conversation with the parents during the first scheduled interviews so I thought perhaps if the child were included, and the parents could focus on the child as a person, not just as a student who was not meeting an external measure, things might be more positive. But it did not work out that way at all. The parents just ended up attacking the child right in front of me, which was not what I'd hoped for at all.

M. Our school is moving into student led conferences.

D. I've always made student attendance a possibility even when it was not a school policy. If they and their parents both wanted them to come to the interview I felt more comfortable including them in the conversation than talking about them behind their backs.

L. I think I will just leave the child's attendance at interviews optional this year. I have made a big effort to meet my students and their parents in other ways and at other times than the scheduled parent teacher interviews. I've tried to meet them with their parents in places which are comfortable for them. I met with Jade and her mom last week and the three of us talked about school and about how Jade was feeling about it. It was very comfortable, and the focus was on Jade's feelings as well as on her learning. There was no need to compare her to everyone else. But if it were the three of us sitting in classroom, I think it would be quite different because of all the expectations that govern what is important and what is talked about in the school context. I think a lot has to happen before we can have conversations in our schools which include children, which ensure they are in the presence of good company rather than external evaluators.

K. I think that one of the most uncomfortable spaces, I've ever been in, was at a conference when a child was being attacked. The space in this school was very very tight. On interview night, the secretary was in charge of ringing the buzzer. You had fifteen minutes for an interview and then her voice would come over the intercom letting the parents and us know (get out) it was time to move on. I was team teaching and a couple of the conferences were really terrible because the other teacher and I did not share the same philosophy about children. But one interview stood apart from all the rest. The parents were criticizing their child and this seemed to provide the opening my teaching partner was looking for because she jumped in too and they all started attacking the child. We were sitting around a table, and I kept trying to stop what was happening by making positive comments and including the child. They didn't even seem to realize what they were doing, but I think watching that little person shrink lower and lower and lower was the worse situation I've ever been in.

M. You ended up becoming her advocate.

K. But to see parents attack a child like this was awful. I was trying to understand where they were coming from. They didn't seem one bit concerned with what they were doing to the child and it was almost as if they thought we would be pleased they were straightening their child out like this.

M. That probably goes back to their own experiences with schooling and they still have this thing of I've got to please the teacher. (mmhmm) Even with their child. It's okay, we're linked with the teacher here. (mmhmm)

K. A conspiracy against the child almost. (mmhmm)
D. And possibly a little worse than sitting there and talking as if the child's not even present which really bothers me! (yes)
L. I think that's why we need to talk a lot more about bringing students into these conversations. Even if an interview is a horrible conversation between three adults, it's just between the adults, but when the child is there it becomes a pedagogical and ethical issue. I think we need to be ready for how we will live this new story as teachers and the space has to be ready for the child before he or she is invited in. The space has to be created first and then the child can be included as we sit down in that space of conversation. But before I see that happening we will have to question a lot of the sacred stories that control the space of school.
K. Yes, we do have to talk a lot about it.
M. I've been including students for seven years now. But I think it is easier for someone teaching in grade one or two, because it's the first time parents have come to a conference so they're a little bit unsure and will let the teacher guide the interactions.
D. I have my students do their own report cards. I think it really helps them enter into the evaluation process in a way that is meaningful for them and I've found that if the child and I share this report card at the beginning of the interview it starts off the conversation with parents on a very personal and unintimidating note. If the teacher points out the child's weakness, the parents almost feel compelled to try to improve the child, but if a child writes about all the things he or she has learned and the areas he or she intends to work on the parents get drawn into a circle of love and of caring for this child. They are not as ready to draw the line that separates the child they love at home from the student they send to school.
M. I like them to do one on me too.
D. So do I, and I have some that are hilarious as well as others that let me evaluate the middle space I have or have not constructed very accurately.
M. They're usually bang on! (yes, laughter, overlapping conversation) Get's a little too annoyed when our class is a mess! (laughter) Makes learning a lot of fun!

Reflective Turn: Bowman and Haggerson (1990) offer us the metaphor of the fan to help us think about curriculum. "The fan is the process and the product in which the creator enfolds the story to be unfolded; it is the curriculum! The creator lends life to the fan, which then takes on a life of its own and, in turn, affects the lives of those both actively and passively experiencing it" (p. 50).

The students in our classes enfold their voices, their stories and their lives in the curriculum. The curriculum is constructed and reconstructed through this enfolding. As this curriculum is then unfolded in a classroom which invites student participation through conversations, writing, dances, poems, paintings and stories, meaning is socially constructed. Others are allowed to enter into the curricular process. Their responses and our own changing reflections are then enfolded as new stories into both the individual and the collaborative curriculum in an ongoing and recursive process.

However as Bowman and Haggerson remind us, this unfolding, enfolding curriculum which requires students to become active agents in their own learning and teachers to learn as they teach involves risks for both students and teachers as vulnerability and uncertainty are an integral part of this learning process.

Maxine Greene (1990), in responding to Bowman and Haggerson, says "The ideas of recursiveness and re-visioning are related provocatively to an emerging dialogue, to life stories, and to ongoing processes of writing and articulating that give form and sense to the flow of experiences. Clearly, this would mean little if it did not in some fashion open the way to community or prepare the ground for a public space" (76). As I think about these words, I am reminded that middle space is a space where private and public meet in a community of relationship, respect and response. Greene says such curriculum enables "students to find their voices, to think about their own thinking, to open themselves to others, to perceive continuities in their experience, to deal with disequilibrium and dissonance and chaos" (p.77) in a space that Hannah Arendt (1961) called the "common world" (p.78).

# CHAPTER SIX

# REFRAMING AND RECLAIMING OUR LIVES: CHAOS, CREATIVITY AND CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE MIDDLE SPACE

## PART I.

## REAWAKENING TO OUR STORIES IN 3 - D SPACE

> If experience has the narrative quality attributed to it here, not only our self-identity but the empirical and moral cosmos in which we are conscious of living is implicit in our multidimensional story. It therefore becomes evident that a conversion or a social revolution that actually transforms consciousness requires a traumatic change in a man's[1] story. The stories within which he has awakened to consciousness must be undermined, and in the identification of his personal story through a new story both the drama of his experience and his style of action must be reoriented. Conversion is reawakening, a second awakening of consciousness. His style must change steps, he must dance to a new rhythm. Not only his past and future, but the very cosmos in which he lives is strung in a new way (Crites, 1971, p. 307).

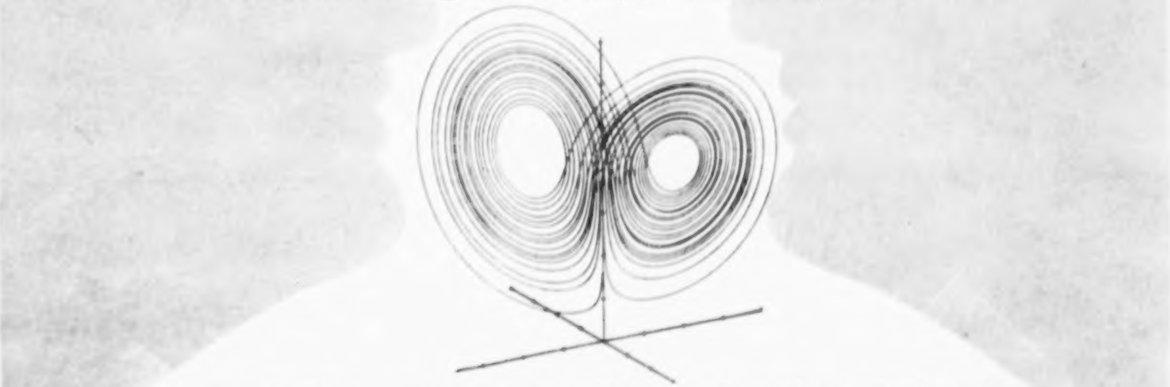

**Figure 4**. This magical image, resembling an owl's mask or butterfly's wings, became an emblem for the early explorers of chaos. It revealed the fine structure hidden within a disorderly stream of data. . . At any instant in time, the three variables fix the location of a point in three-dimensional space; as the system changes, the motions of the point represents the continuously changing variable. Because the system never exactly repeats itself, the trajectory never intersects itself. Instead it loops around and around forever (Gleick, 1987 p. 29)

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[1] Crites uses the masculine term to refer to both males and females. The author of this text does not accept this as mere convention but sees it as the collapsing of human experience in a manner that denies the feminine and forces women into a masculine mold, a mold which negates their particular stories even as it distances them from their private selves.

## .... An Image of middle space

Research Journal: As I think about chaos theory, about the awakenings and reawakenings which have transformed previously accepted thinking, I wonder if the drama and images of chaos can help us imagine the middle space of life, of creativity, of learning, of teaching, of schools, in new and transformative ways? Is this an image of a reality which can not be captured in a line on a graph, in a prescribed curriculum, in measures of accountability? Does this image which captures motion in three-dimensional space offer us the possibility to think about complexity in the educational system in a way that frees us from linearity and predictability. Before chaos, scientists ignored nonlinearity when they wanted to get a good simple understanding of a system. They have since come to see that linearity is the exception, not the rule. I wonder if in education we too have been conditioned to ignore more than we see, if we too have been consumed with the goal of constructing a good simple understanding and a generalizable knowledge at the expense of the richness and multiplicity of chaos and creativity. If the flutter of a butterfly's wings must be considered as we paint a picture of the weather, how can we ignore the questions of a child as we construct the curriculum? How can the image of chaos in physical systems so much less complex than those we live and work in as educators free us to think about teaching, learning, relationships in the middle space? Does the image of infinite degrees of freedom and flexibility within structure speak to a need to stop the trend toward reductionism long enough to see the complexity embedded in space? Can the infinity of fractals and the embedding of scales speak to both our insignificance and our significance? Can chaos speak to the call of stories, the musicality of experience, the drama of life? Can it stop us from writing conclusions?[2]

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[2] In a traditional thesis, the final chapter is a place to consider implications and draw conclusions. That however, is not the purpose I envision for this chapter. I see it rather as a place for new beginnings, as a place from which we can imagine new possibilities and transformed practice, as a call to action. As the stories we live by are called into question, our style of action must be reassessed and our roles in a new script restoried. I hope the call of our stories will leave teachers with the desire to reframe their teaching practice and reclaim their teaching lives in a multi-dimensional middle space.

## .... Restorying our world: A story of chaos

Edward Lorenz was a meteorologist who had a mathematical interest in weather prediction. He hoped with the help of his computer, he would be able to do in forecasting "what astronomers had been able to do with a pencil and slide rule: reckon the future of their universe from its initial conditions and the physical laws that guide its evolution" by cashing in on "the Newtonian promise that the world unfolded along a deterministic path, rule-bound like the planets, predictable like eclipses and tides" (p. 13, 14). However, at the philosophical heart of the scientific story which framed his thinking, was the assumption that an approximate knowledge of a system's initial conditions would allow one to calculate the approximate behavior of the system. Since Western science was based on the idea "that you don't have to take into account the falling of a leaf on some planet in another galaxy when you're trying to account for the motion of a billiard ball on a pool table on earth" (p. 15), Lorenz and other scientists believed that small influences and small differences could be neglected.

As long as Lorenz worked within these assumptions, within this reality which blocked out more than it allowed him to see, the graphic images on his printouts matched his intuition about the weather. His sense that weather repeated itself, displaying familiar patterns over time even though the repetitions were never quite exact, was not disturbed because the scientific story he believed in made it impossible for him to ignore those things which did not fit. Within this paradigm, he could see patterns unfolding predictably. But one day, being in a hurry, he started in the middle of a run and not thinking it significant, he typed in just three of the six decimal places in his equation. The story he knew allowed him to assume that one part in a thousand (like small puffs of wind) would cancel each other out. To the contrary, these small errors proved catastrophic. "Lorenz felt a jolt: something was philosophically out of joint" (p.17). And with this philosophical jolt, the window he looked at the world through changed as he realized the outcome of a system was sensitive to conditions as minute as the flutter of a butterfly's wings. With this realization came an understanding that any system that behaved nonperiodically would be unpredictable and that the possibility of chaos was inevitable at every point. The global behaviour of a system was sensitive to initial conditions, to local conditions, a consequence of the ways small scales intertwined with large. "Had he stopped with the Butterfly Effect, an image of predictability giving way to pure randomness, then Lorenz would have produced no more than a piece of very bad news. But Lorenz saw more than randomness embedded in his weather model. He saw a fine geometrical structure, order masquerading as randomness" (p.22).

Plotting linear relationships is easy. On a computer printout a linear relationship appears as a line on a graph. "Linear relationships are easy to think about: the more the merrier. Linear equations are solvable, which makes them suitable for textbooks. Linear systems have an important modular virtue:

you can take them apart, and put them together again - the pieces add up" (p. 23). "Nonlinear systems generally can not be solved and can not be added together. In fluid systems and mechanical systems, the nonlinear terms tend to be the features that people want to leave out when they try to get a good, simple understanding. . . Nonlinearity means that the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules. . .That twisted changeability makes nonlinearity hard to calculate, but it also creates the rich kinds of behavior that never occur in linear systems" (p. 24). Lorenz found that when he wrote just three equations for these nonlinear systems, with three variables, he was able to completely describe the motion of this system. "To make a picture from the data, Lorenz used each set of three numbers as coordinates to specify the location of a point in three-dimensional space. Thus the sequence of numbers produced a sequence of points tracing a continuous path, a record of the system's behavior. Such a path might lead to one place and stop, meaning that the system had settled down to a steady state.....or the path might form a loop, going around and around, meaning that the system had settled into a pattern of behavior that would repeat itself periodically. Lorenz's system did neither. Instead, the map displayed a kind of infinite complexity. It always stayed within certain bounds, never running off the page but never repeating itself, either. It traced a strange, distinctive shape, a kind of double spiral in three dimensions, like a butterfly with its two wings. The shape signalled pure disorder, since no point or pattern of points ever recurred. Yet it also signalled a new kind of order" (p. 30).

Transcripts: (p. 134)
*Anne's Reflection: I know that I, as a teacher, as a parent, as a friend, am shaped by the middle space of the classrooms of my childhood. Sometimes the lack of that middle space was so apparent - it was like being a three dimensional person in a flattened, two dimensional space. There was no room, no space for any part of my personality other than the intellectual and yet the teacher gave herself room to be emotional - to yell and to punish.*

### .... A place where we can play

Transcripts: (p.100 - 107)
M. I've noticed that after being in my room for about three months, which must be about the amount of time the students need to feel secure enough to question my actions, they start to say things to me like, "You're not supposed to do that, that's what kids do." When I ask them what they mean they say, "Well, you're playing, or you're talking like a kid, or you're on the playground equipment." I'll be in the middle of reading them a story and I'll say, "Wow! I didn't realize that. Look at this," being very divergent which is how kids are. That's when I can see them think, this is not right, there is something different

in this picture. They're not quite comfortable with seeing that spontaneity and diversity in an adult. (laughter, You don't fit into the model of an adult.) You're right, and I've come to the conclusion it's because that part has not been squished out of me. I don't know whether it's just been reawakened in me as I'm around kids or whether I went into teaching because working with kids provided a comfortable environment for that part of me. (mmmhmm, Laughter)

Reflective Turn: Crites (1971), helps us understand the experience of Margaret's students when he talks about being born into the consciousness of a society. Choices have already been made which affect how these children will see the world and themselves in the world. Like Freire's peasants (1990), they have been unconsciously constituted by the values of their society. They have expectations about how things should look even though they had no part in making those choices, in establishing those expectations, and for the most part they will accept these things as natural, as outside the realm of choice. They are quick to realize when something does not fit within the parameters of their reality, but they only identify the thing which does not fit. They do not question the container it is supposed to fit in. It's not easy to question containers, or discourses, or paradigms, not when one has been born into them.

K. I can relate to what you're saying. I feel excited when you talk about play and I feel excited when I think about the pleasure of sharing books or other experiences with my grade two students. But I think learning in much of school and in university is different from what you're describing. I think the feeling of excitement and of entering wholeheartedly into something is missing from most of our educational experiences. I find this easier to do as a teacher than as a student. Maybe it's because as a teacher I'm able to define my role, to construct a middle space for myself, whereas when I'm with other adult students, or when I was a child living within an adult structure, there was and is this box. A woman in one of my classes talked about it being like a cage. She talked about going into two classes at the beginning of her graduate studies. In the one class she just felt like she was a caged animal. She'd hand something in and she would get it back with her "t's" crossed. Basically that's what she got back. In the other class she said it was like suddenly going into a field in a long skirt with her hair blowing. She felt so free. (laughter) She said of her experience in this class, "I'm going back and forth. It's like the pen is open and I'm going back and forth. The classroom is like the pen that let's me move and write. It lets me go farther out there, extending myself and my questions. But in the other class I'm like a caged animal."

Reflective Turn: How can the dynamic image of chaos help us picture both the fluidity and possibility the middle space must encompass if teachers and students are not going to be caged, and the order and purposefulness schooling must encompass if students are to learn? Speaking of the work of Ruelle and Takens, Gleick (1987) paints a moving picture of fluidity and possibility within boundaries.

> One advantage of thinking of states as points in space is that it makes change easier to watch. A system whose variables change continuously up or down becomes a moving point, like a fly moving around a room. If some combinations of variables never occur, then a scientist can simply imagine that part of the room as out of bounds. . . If a system behaves periodically, coming around to the same state again and again, then the fly moves in a loop, passing through the same position in phase space again and again. Phase-space portraits of physical systems exposed patterns of motion that were invisible otherwise". . . This loop corresponds to that periodicity. This twist corresponds to that change. This empty void corresponds to that physical impossibility . . . Every piece of a dynamical system that can move independently is another variable, another degree of freedom. Every degree of freedom requires another dimension in phase space, to make sure that a single point contains enough information to determine the state of the system uniquely (Gleick, 1987, pp. 134 - 135).

Complex systems with infinite degrees of freedom can not be imagined apart from a phase space of infinite dimensions. Yet as teachers and students, we are so often confined to a two dimensional existence.

M. I think my ability to live outside the cage provides a link with little children. It lets me construct a middle space with them. I got Lego for Christmas a couple of years ago. I was really interested in the Castle Lego and just after Christmas my husband bought me a whole bunch of it. I brought it to school. I was very protective of it at first but I'm a lot better about it this year. The students always want to know whose Lego it is. When I say it's mine, they want to know, well who plays with it. When I say, well actually I do because I build castles they are very skeptical. They don't believe me at first. But when I say yesterday my daughter built a whole zoo in the castle and we did this and this with it, then they say, oh you do play with it. And I say well yes, I was playing. Now I would not be comfortable telling my staff that that's what I was doing last night (mmhmm) but I share that with my students. And then they believe me and I can see my credibility going up in their eyes.

*Margaret's Reflection:* *Maybe this is one reason I can create space for children. Do I still know how to be in their space or do they allow me in because they recognize in me the ability to remember?*

M. When I first acknowledged the fact I played, I used to take this group of kids to the park and I would always play with them as long as no one else was around. I would run and play on the equipment and go up and down the poles and stuff and they got to calling me Mommy Long Legs. On the way to the park they'd start calling me that and on the way back they would call me Mrs. Allen. But while we were playing it was Mommy Long Legs.

### .... Middle space at the kitchen table

Transcripts: (pp. 103 - 107)
L. I wrote a story about how we can create a middle space by entering into the world of the other too. Margaret talked about entering the child's world through play. This story is about entering the world of parents and about finding ways of connecting their experiences and knowledge to the middle space we are creating in school. It is a middle space created through conversation which occurs outside the hierarchically ordered space of school, a middle space constructed by equals.

L. *There are sure a lot of I's in this journey to the middle space. I wonder, where the voices of parents and children are? As I search for ways to create spaces in my classroom, I think back to Susan and her story about spending her first year as a vice-principal just listening. I've been trying to do that with parents this year, spend my time listening. I've been visiting with them during the last two months. I go to hockey games or to their homes for coffee. At first I was a little apprehensive, but it's been wonderful. These kitchen table talks with parents make a space for me to hear their voices so I can include their stories in the middle space at school.*

M. It's much easier to hear others in their own territory in their own space....
L. Oh, it's wonderful....I love it there....
M. ....than in what they consider your space.
L. ....and this year, I don't consider the school my space so we may as well go to where somebody feels like they have a space. (laughter)
M. Well, I said what they consider to be your space.

L. *I think part of the sadness I see comes from times when we don't listen and when we make judgments before we hear the stories. The stories that were being told about Kyle when I came really helped me see the harm in this. His last teacher told me how strange he was, how weird he was. Everyone in the school including the counsellor talked about how odd he was. My heart* *aches for Kyle. The other students can be very mean to him. I think I hear the words of "the other" from them though, the words of adults. They've been taught quite well. Kyle seemed young and old to me at the same time. I sensed that he carried the burden - one shared with his mom - of living so far from home. He and his mom and dad own a farm quite a distance from here but in order to support the farm she has to work here. As long as they want to keep the farm she has to live here. They're in a little two bedroom apartment that faces the school in our town because she wanted to live close to the school for Kyle. She commutes to a big city nearby to work and her husband is at the farm. No wonder he's withdrawn. No wonder he's weird. And that's my story of him. But he's their only child and he will take over the farm. He loves the farm. He doesn't talk about it. I wouldn't have even known he was from a farm if I hadn't talked to his mom. But his mom showed me pictures of his farm. It has a great big old three story farmhouse and the yard is just immaculate. She's a woman who loves her farm too. She loves it and she was crying when she was looking at the pictures.*

M. Do they go back in the summer?
L. They go back in the summer for weekends and then she takes her two week vacation there.
D. What does she do? Why can't she work there?
L. Oh, I asked her that well.

*She did have a job in a city closer to the farm but they laid her off, everyone's getting laid off. But the company needed somebody in another city so they offered her the job and she knew if she didn't take it the farm would go. So she came and that's how they live. And Kyle doesn't have any friends, or so the story goes, but when I went over to visit him he had a friend there from another school and they were playing Nintendo. He seemed like a really nice little guy too and they were having a great time so I said to myself, this "no friend" story doesn't work here. But he, I mean, he blows his nose loudly . . . If Kyle's not quite like the rest of the group I can see why. I'm not like the rest of the group either, I miss Greg. But I'm going to see him soon and there's an end to our separation in sight. For Kyle there's no end in sight. But the others don't see that or hear that, they just say Kyle is weird. Even the counsellor says his mom doesn't know how weird he is. She doesn't know how socially inept he is. And I want to ask, do you know the story, what's happening that you're not hearing or seeing? So often I find it's the us and them thing. There's no space. We're running on parallel lines but there is no space in the middle and there needs to be. . . (pause)*

D. There needs to be a connection between home space and school space. Expecting the person to be totally different in the school space and to be able to leave behind all that matters in their home space at school creates no middle space for that child.

L. I'm surprised actually that academically he is doing quite well.

K. But I wonder what happens when we run these parallel lines - when we don't connect with our students and their families in some way.

L. To his last teacher Kyle was the enemy. He was the one who made her life miserable.

M. But children are different. Other people will look at my class and say, oh do you ever have strange kids in your class. And I do, but the other side to that is that they're incredibly creative and our discussions are really interesting.

L. But differences by grade six are not tolerated at all. A context has been created already, there's a definite standard behaviour that is seen as normal. They've learned this from adults, but it's magnified at that age and the little things are what they look for to get you. They're hard on each other, incredibly hard on each other and on themselves.

Reflective Turn: But how do we make room for difference? How do we construct a middle space of ethical conduct? In her exploration of ethical conduct, Winnie Tomm (1992), looks to the work of Jessica Benjamin (1986) and Carol Christ (1987a,b) and is in agreement with their understanding that "ethics is a matter of acting out our desire for inner space - where one's subjective power is grounded - while at the same time living through that power in relation to other subjects" (pp. 101 - 102). Using the image of the self as permeable (both self-determined and socially constructed) rather than soluble, she sees our ability to engage in ethical conduct arising from the "desire for separation and connection in self-determination and social relations" . . . and says that "ways of knowing oneself are inseparable from ways of knowing others and being known by them" (p. 102).

## .... From chaos to constructed knowing

> Research Proposal: *How can I make room for you? How can I make school your space, a space where you can come to know, a space for us with room for you? And if I could, what would this space be? That is the question. The unspoken question, not found precipitously dangling at the end of some recent research but never-the-less, the question that permeates so many educational stories, so much pedagogical conversation, the question that brings us to the edge (Le Guin, 1989) even as it draws us to the centre.*

Transcripts: (pp. 127 - 132)

D. *The trip from the classroom, where I had already been successful in organization and control for one whole and heady week, to the science room where I had planned enough open-ended experiences to single handedly improve the nation's achievement scores, was not a long one. It was in fact only a short way down a straight corridor where the teacher could turn at any moment and readily apprehend those recalcitrants who find it impossible to conform to military formation and style for even a few short steps. However, this grim possibility did nothing to deter the energy and enthusiasm of any of the thirty-five grade five students who walked behind me in anything but an approved hallway manner on that fateful day.*

*This in itself would have warned an experienced teacher of the possibility of potential disaster; but unfortunately, as a student teacher, I was not yet able to see, let alone interpret, the danger signals as I marched confidently into what I would so soon come to know as my own defeat. Secretly thrilled by the vibrant expectations I felt emanating from the class behind me, I knew I was going to be a marvellous teacher. After all, I believed in active participation and was committed to the process of discovery learning whereby students would direct their own learning experiences and reach the pinnacle of self actualization far ahead of their plodding teachers who had had to endure the stifling influences of the more traditional teacher controlled and directed classroom. The world was waiting to be discovered, and I had no intention of hindering its exploration.*

*To that great philosophic and morally defensible end, I had arranged the science room to perfection. Days had gone into the preparation of materials for the Coloured Solutions unit which was to last until the end of my practicum experience, and that very morning I had arrived at school at the crack of dawn to get everything set up and ready for the task commitment and open-ended discovery that would surely impress all who entered to observe or evaluate. So as we proceeded down the hall, seven stations, totally equipped with everything the five students who were to work at each would need to discover and learn in cooperative endeavour, stood in readiness and beckoned forth the students who waited for me to unlock not only the door of the science room but also the door of knowledge through the inquiry method otherwise known as the "holocaust approach."*

*The experience that ensued was such that to this day I can not remember what the hidden purpose of that free exploration was, or what it was those eloquently worded centre cards had encouraged students to discover in their free play with the materials. For in their first day of experimentation, they had used up the whole supply of food colouring and solutions. They mixed and they messed, they laughed and they squirted. They totally and entirely, collectively and individually, missed the point of the whole experience as I ran frantically from station to station trying to impose some belated order on the chaos and establish some control of students who had no idea of what was* *expected of them in this new discovery learning environment.*

*Fortunately, no other teacher had booked the science room that day because after I finally got everyone back to the classroom I worked at both recesses and the noon hour to clean up the aftermath of the students' experimentation and the evidence of my incompetence. In fact, I was still cleaning after school when the principal came in to tell me to quit working so hard and found me close to tears. Trying to be helpful, he told me that what I still hardly had words to describe could not have been as bad as I thought it had been. He was wrong. Trying to comfort me, he told me that I should not worry about it anymore. Not advice I was likely to take. Trying to appeal to my pedagogical instincts, he told me that it had probably been a good learning experience for me. And on that one point I have had to concede, he was probably right. Because the more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that I was the only one who had learned anything that day. And as is the case with most good learning experiences, in the many years that have elapsed since then, I have continued to learn as I have storied and restoried this experience more times than I care to remember.*

D. Thank goodness, nobody saw it. (laughter) The principal didn't see it until after I'd already cleaned up a fair bit of the mess. (laughter).
M. It would be interesting if you had that experience again now as an experienced teacher, if your perception of success and failure would change.
A. Would you organize and structure it a lot more?
D. I had everything organized. I had all the stuff at the centres for them to go to. I planned for their movement from centre to centre. They were supposed to neatly experiment at each centre and move to the next one and ha! (laughter) All our beautiful coloured solutions were used up. So we did one day of coloured solutions. I can't remember if we did any more science or if I just stuck to teaching social studies after that (laughter). I think I taught social studies. I was a marvellous social studies teacher. (laughter).
M. But discovery science is often like that. In my sink and float unit, I had a wonderful experience planned too, but as soon as they got there they saw possibilities I had missed and within ten minutes everything that could be detached from the classroom was in the buckets of water. They weren't comparing the rates of drop or anything, it was just throw everything into the water. And that's kind of to be expected. I know now to let that happen first few and to give the lesson after they've had the chance to try out their own ideas.
D. Letting the kids play with the stuff at each step of the way is necessary, but you don't really want to be responsible for using up the school's whole supply of coloured solutions in one day. We should have started to play with plain water because nobody was observing anything anyway. (laughter)
L. Well, maybe they were. (Maybe they were.) But there's so much comfort in hearing stories like this and you don't usually hear them. You think that you're alone in these experiences. At the end of lesson or a day that goes wrong, you feel you don't belong in teaching. You feel incompetent until you hear another

teacher tell a story like this one. The teacher across the hall from me, who I respect very much, told a story like yours and I thought, I guess I'm not incompetent. We all have those kind of days and I'm not alone in having them. I still felt awful but it just helped to know that someone else's best laid plans could go astray. It reaffirmed that I'm okay. (laughter, comments) I just misjudged, or like the weather, many things can happen to change things. Those stories are so helpful you know.

D. And telling them helps create a safer space for teachers, doesn't it?

L. It does, it does.

A. It's very easy to be hard on yourself when you're in your own room and you don't see what others are doing (mmmhmm) and you think you're the only one who is having any trouble.

L. And everybody else seems to be able to do it so perfectly.

K. Everything looks so good from the hallway. (laughter)

D. There are some things I know now that I didn't understand then. At that time, I thought we had to stay in the science room until the end of the science lesson. I didn't realize the end could come at any time. If that happened now I'd call a halt a lot quicker. I'd turn the lights out, get everybody's attention, have them put their heads down so I could think for a minute, and then I'd start over again once we had talked some more about what we were going to do. I'd have as many beginnings as we needed because I no longer think about lessons in such a linear way. Sometimes you need to have an ending so you can have a new beginning. My students love when I let them have new beginnings. It's not that my first instructions are inadequate, or that they don't listen. Sometimes until they start to do something they don't even know what it is they should be attending to in the directions or the introduction. What I'm saying doesn't make any sense to them. But once they've started to do the activity and see the chaos building around them because they don't know what they are doing, the need for instructions starts to make sense and they want to talk about how they can begin again. Introductions often make more sense in the middle or at the end of a lesson then they do at the beginning. But that day was like a nightmare. There is no other possible way to describe it. I was running madly around going, shh -shh -shh! (laughter)

M. I bet every teacher has a story like that to tell, if not a whole repertoire (oh yes, right, many)

A. And sometimes that story and your self-identity can be made or broken by the feedback you get.

Research Journal: How does the concept of "Good Company" help us think about the idea of a middle space? Is middle space safe space?

*Anne's Reflection: For me, it's really important to be able to share these stories. But the feedback I receive is important too, as it helps direct me to thinking positively or negatively about an experience and eventually, about* *the whole enchilada! (career) It ties into our "good company" idea in this way for me. We see safe space as necessary for students. I think teachers need a feeling of a safe space too.*

### .... Middle space undercover and in the margins

Transcripts: (pp. 260 - 263)
L. The circuit kits are for grade five. They are well equipped but I'm not supposed to have a circuit kit in grade six. So it's kind of like a conspiracy but I can't shut my door that's the thing. If I could shut the door we'd be rebelling left and right.

*Lisa's Reflection: Back to my notion of undercover.*

Response Journal: If we are thinking that an open physical space equates to a middle space, Lisa's story might help us rethink this more carefully. She is saying this open space that she is physically in, is actually constricting her middle space and the middle space she can create with her students. She doesn't have the option of shutting her door physically or symbolically on school policy which she finds authoritarian and controlling.

L. Because my classroom is so public I have to be really careful about what I do. It makes me think about how much we rely on the semi-private space of a classroom to escape from those things that intrude into our ability to create a middle space.
D. So you have to shut your door to create space. Isn't that a contradiction?
L. I have to hide the science kits. I have to hide what my students are doing. I found a space in the corner of the school where no one could find them and sent them there with the overhead projector and circuit kit.
D. This sounds like you are constructing middle space in the margins! What an image! It makes me think of a conference I recently attended. Our middle space, our space for conversation and connection, our desire to unite the private and public, was forced to the margins and into the corners by the mainstream agenda. It really made me wonder if it is possible to have a middle space in the mainstream.

*Lisa's Reflection: I wonder too ... no answer yet!*

*Anne's Reflection: This is a scary thought. And this question is interesting. When I was in Wollaston Lake, I thought this is great. The world has advanced by leaps and bounds since I left my last school. Now everyone's into a really sound educational philosophy (i.e. mine). Terrific! But then, with the move to*

*La Ronge, I saw this was not so. We were a real fringe movement in La Ronge. Not mainstream at all.*

D. Remember when I asked the question in my research journal, is the middle space just a little thing, just a little part of the whole or can it be the whole thing? (mmmhmm) I've thought about that a lot. It would be nice if it was the whole thing but I think more often the middle space is to be found in marginalized groups. The desire to create middle space places teachers outside of the mainstream agenda and forces them to create this space on the edges because there is no room to create it in the middle. It's as if those "others" (the invisible force) had no need for this space because separating private from public, emotion from reason, female from male is what "they" expect schools will do. So the last thing they want is a middle space where these dualisms and separations can be reintegrated as part of a whole.

*Lisa's Reflection:* *I think surviving is often a matter of looking for these pockets of middle space in the margins and finding people there we can connect with and work with.*

L. It's funny though because I'm in the middle, physically in the middle, but really on the edges. (laughter - overlapping comments)
D. Do you feel marginalized in your school?
L. Yes.
K. There are also better and worse margins, in a sense, because you can be in the margins at university but because you're at university you're not really marginalized by society. You're elite. But if you're a special education teacher in an elementary school and you're in the margins because you are taking a position outside the mainstream, you really are in a marginalized position. You're not elite. Whereas, in the university even though you might be radical (questioning the dominant ideologies) you still have more space.
D. Maybe, but if you look at the conflict between qualitative and quantitative research you realize that as long as qualitative educational research was content with its position in the margins, a little left of centre stage, it was not perceived as a threat but now that this research is pushing at the boundaries, taking up some centre space, the opposition is mounting. It seemed to me that a lot of people at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting were being marginalized. I think some of the special interest groups have been formed by members who feel their needs are not met within the mainstream agenda. Elliot Eisner, the president of AERA this year, encouraged some of these marginalized researchers in his address which spoke to the importance of multiple ways of doing research and multiple ways of knowing. I think many people were excited about Jean's award for the same reason. For them, it was not just recognition of her work but recognition of narrative research.
M. What award did she get?

D. The Raymond B. Cattell award for an early career contribution to research.
K. Within ten years after you get your Ph.D.
D. But even so, it looked to me, like most of the big sessions were presentations of quantitative research. Presentations of qualitative research tended to be in much smaller and less formal sessions. Even well known researchers within the the qualitative paradigm were in rooms with less than a hundred chairs. These smaller sessions were wonderful for interaction and conversation when half the audience wasn't sitting in the aisles or standing at the back or outside of the doors! To a relative newcomer however, these images and the message sent by the presence of the Invisible College -which meets in the time and space before the authorized meeting - made quite a statement!

*Lisa's Reflection: I'd want little rooms but lots of them.*

K. But even though you are in the margins at the university, it's still an elite margin!
D. Right, okay.
K. If we look at it historically, there are better times and worse times, better places and worse places to be certain minorities.

Research Journal: So, are you saying Kelly, if we looked at middle space globally we would see the schools excluded from a place of middle space that the universities occupy in our society? I don't know. Many of the individual experiences I hear about at the university do not sound like the students or the professors feel they have, or are in the, position to create a middle space either. This makes me wonder if there is any place of middle space apart from the places people work to construct it wherever those places may be located. I'm saying this even as I'm also saying that the place in which schools are situated, historically, hierarchally and politically is important because this multidimensional place we occupy impacts on our ability as teachers to construct a middle space with our students and with our colleagues. The specificity of this place defines the dilemmas we encounter and restricts the professionalism we can achieve by limiting the value of our knowing and thus our power to make decisions about curriculum, assessment and even our own professional development and evaluation.

Reflective Turn: Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), explore the significance of place in their book, *Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis: The Significance of Place.* Drawing on the work of Habermas which extends psychoanalysis from the individual to the social realm and brings to social consciousness that which has been repressed, the authors propose understanding and emancipation can only be achieved as unexamined assumptions, values and forces which are called "second nature" by Freud (and "the sacred story" by Crites,1971) are deconstructed. Only as the processes of remembrance and critical interrogation replace the process of forgetting and consequently the reification of existing practices and relationships in language, culture and political life, is social health possible. However, this remembrance is only possible as the particular is brought into focus and the personal is made political.

> Without place our appreciation of such particularistic forces tends to be fuzzy and depersonalized. . . As place informs our quest to understand the social world, our attention is adjusted to the concrete, the named, the identified. A novelist or a historian can not remove a story from a particular place; it would no longer be the same story. So powerful is place, Eudora Welty argued, that a bomb that destroyed all traces of places as we know them, would, as a result, destroy all feelings (Welty 1977). . . In fiction, place is used to create a world of appearance -- a world essential to the novel's believability. Curriculum theory, likewise, must possess a particularistic social theory, a grounded view of the world in which education takes place" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p.p. 4 - 5).

M. (Margaret, who is reading while we are in the midst of this philosophical conversation, laughs.) I love it. I love your notes, your comments in the transcripts. You are so funny.
D. Why?
M. You're really funny. Your first transcripts were word for word syllable for syllable (yes) and now it's: (reading) "Some soft comments most of which I can not hear. We sound kind of weary. We drift off to some very general comments about conferences which I have not transcribed. There is a long pause in which I thought we were resting but in which Lisa was thinking up a hard question." (laughter) I remember that: She asked me, "How has your teaching changed?" - Quick recovery - Mine? (laughter) L. How is it changing? M. In what way? (hysterical laughter) I don't know. You mean from when I started? Okay, this has given me enough time to give you the answer." (hysterical laughter punctuated by high squeals)
D. Did you make some middle space for yourself here Margaret?

L. You'd do great in an interview. (laughter)
M. I do (laughter) I do.
M. I like interviews. I see them as a personal challenge. And what I said must have been important because Debbie has highlighted my words in the transcripts.

### .... The significance of place

Transcripts: (pp. 293 - 294)
M. We went on a pond study last week. One of the mothers said, "Our pond has frog eggs in it. Do you want to come?" So I just booked a bus and two days later we climbed on. It was the first nice day we'd had. We all went to the pond and collected buckets of water. I had stayed up late the night before and built a little pond frame with plastic in it, so when we got back we dumped all the water in there. Now we're watching all these tadpoles grow. It's a lot of fun.
L. That's just the best. I love doing that. I love it. I love it. It's so easy. (mmmhmm) If you collect a hundred eggs you'll get at least fifteen or twenty that (who will live) will turn into tadpoles and then frogs. That's what's so amazing. . .
D. Unlike most science experiments which do not turn out (overlapping talk) like the plant you put into the cupboard which is supposed to turn yellow and die but which flourishes instead, (yes) or the one in the sand which grows as well as the one in the good soil. (laughter, I've had that before too) I hate those plant experiments. The only one that doesn't grow is the one in the good soil which sits in the sun and that you actually remember to water every day! (laughter)
M. We did plants for three weeks. I had them stick a piece of paper beside the plant everyday to measure the growth. They would cut the paper off and glue it down on a big piece of paper to make a running graph. We would look at the graph and could see on some days the plant didn't grow at all. (mmmhmm) It was because there wasn't any sun in the room on those days. All these years I knew that plants needed sunlight to grow, but when you see it pictured on the graph, it's like you really know it! And all the kids know it too. It is really dramatic, somehow.

Reflective Turn: The story of how we come to know through connecting the particular to the general is embedded in Margaret's science stories. It is also discussed by Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) who link knowledge, theory and the will for political action "to the insight derived from concrete situatedness, that is, place" (p. 19).

> The appreciation of individual sensation can be the genesis of larger political awareness -- the refusal to deny restlessness,

> discomfort, moral ambiguity, and the impulse to reject. . . Place becomes an important means of linking particularity to the social concerns of curriculum theory. A sense of place allows for an intensified focus on sensation. Such a focus provides a sense of direction and identity that might empower individuals to struggle and to endure ( Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 21).

### .... The other side of the fence

Transcripts: (pp.120 - 127)
D. I thought (on page seven) it was interesting when we talked about being on the other side of the fence. Just the fact we would say that, that we're now on the other side of the fence, speaks to our feeling that there is some dividing line, that something is in and something is out.
A. It could also refer to those of us who aren't teaching right now. We're on the other side of a fence too.
(Pause as people read transcripts)
K. I find this interesting, that Sunday night feeling we have as teachers.
M. Had you forgotten that?
K. I'm actually writing about it right now in a paper I'm doing about the experience of being a graduate student, what it's like to be back in school. One of the students I spoke with said being a graduate student is like being totally saturated. The experience brings one back to a time of childhood when time was all the same, when it wasn't divided up yet. And I thought that's what is happening to me now, too. Because I'm working right through the weekends, I don't have that Sunday night feeling, that feeling of gearing up for Monday morning, of getting ready to cross into a different space. It's just different. I'm always at the graduate student thing. Everything else I do is just a slice away from student life so even when I'm away from it, it's like I'm pulled back to it. So it is very different. Even though I do different things, I have a sense of wholeness. The divisions are gone. Time has a very different feeling to it. Anyway, this is not to do with space.

Reflective Turn: I'm not so sure about that! I think it may have a lot to do with the psychological/emotional space we're in, with the division we feel within ourselves as we cross from one side of the fence to the other. When Anne said how quickly we're on the other side of the fence, it made me think of something Madeleine Grumet said about a dividing line in space.

> Even though aesthetic objects and aesthetic experience are spread out on the other side of the boundary from the places where money, supper, and trouble are made, the artist regularly passes back and forth between the actual and the possible, and

> we are, all of us, commuters. (Grumet, 1988, p. 78)

An image of a fence came to my mind, something bounding the space I am in. I wonder, is it keeping them in and us out, or is it keeping them out and us in.

## PART II.
## WHEN THE FRAME DOESN'T FIT THE EXPERIENCE: TEACHER EVALUATION

Research Journal: As I cross and recross the boundaries between teaching as an aesthetic experience, as an accommodation to bureaucracy and politically defined objectives, as the construction and conversation of middle space I am not sure identifying myself as a commuter (Grumet, 1988) between these various landscapes captures the essence of this experience for me. Commuters, it seems, pass relatively effortlessly and unscathed through the boundaries they cross over. I, on the other hand, often feel disjointed, if not battered and bruised. The languages I speak in each land are foreign to each other, and I often feel compelled to leave my self and my stories behind in the hands of border guards who are stationed so as to protect the meta-narratives (McLaren, 1993) and sacred stories (Crites, 1971) from those who would seek to interrogate the myths (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) and in this personal and political undertaking, reframe their experiences (LeCompte, 1993) compose their lives (Bateson, 1990), restory their teaching practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1994b), and transform knowledge (Martin, 1994; Code, 1991; Minnich, 1990).

### .... The myth of the excellent teacher

Transcripts: (pp. 239 - 242)
L. Sometimes I get tired of hearing about the "excellent teacher" and I wonder why I can't just be, why I can't just grow in a way that is right for me rather than according to someone else's plan. I'm a very different teacher than I was ten years ago and I'm going to be very different ten years from now. So why can't I just be who I am, rather than having to fit my development into the Madeleine

Hunter model or into the model of whoever else has evaluated me in the last ten years. I don't want a five for excellence. I don't want any number! I want to be who I am right now and I want to say where I think I might still like to grow. I don't want to try to reach some plane of excellence that has been determined by someone else to be good teaching. What makes me good isn't maybe what makes you good.

Lisa's Reflection: *This is never talked about in evaluation of teachers. I suppose my criteria are based on hoping that teachers will actively engage in this type of reflection and self-directed growth.*

K. I think maybe as I get older and more experienced I don't worry as much about other peoples' evaluations of me, and it shows, I probably wouldn't be able to get back into my last school, even if I wanted to because I would not let someone else set all the rules, and all the criteria. But I still would do exactly what I did because I have the confidence now after teaching for a number of years and I feel quite comfortable with what I'm doing. That doesn't mean that I can't be shaken up by children because it's mostly children who cause me to rethink my practice. But if a principal comes in and starts asking me about language learning, I feel quite comfortable with my philosophy so I can say this is what I'm doing and this is why I'm doing it. But there is always this feeling that you'll be evaluated according to an outside scale and you just hope you are doing what this person considers to be excellent.

M. It's hard for me to identify my criteria for excellence because I see excellence in most people that I work with but for different reasons. I'm quite comfortable with someone saying to me you're excellent in this area but not in that area because I'm comfortable with knowing that about myself.

Research Journal: But are you comfortable with this because you are in a safe space personally and professionally? Can you think of a professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) where you would not be comfortable with your perceived or known "weaknesses" being identified by someone else? Why do some spaces make this kind of self knowledge possible, while others make us try to hide ourselves from each other and even from ourselves? Tell me, would such a place be a middle space? I want to know the right answer!

Anne's Reflection: *I'm thinking here of the open door/closed door image. There are many closed door schools. I've taught in a couple where everybody keeps their classroom activities and experiences under tight wraps, where there is no school wide middle space at all. People might whisper about so and so being a yeller, or about someone else whose classroom is untidy but* *these observations of weaknesses are as close as one gets to knowing what others are up to. By way of contrast I have also taught in a school where we all felt comfortable to take risks, to share ideas, to be open. I felt like the teachers in this school really cared about the students and placed them first. In the other school, the closed door school, the teacher's ego and the image that was presented seemed more important.*

Research Journal: Can we think about how we feel about being evaluated against someone else's criteria for excellence as opposed to a context where we are able to identify both strengths and weaknesses (areas for growth) in ourselves, and relate this to middle space in our schools and in the teaching profession? How do our evaluation stories help us think about how we can create a middle space for students?

Anne's Reflection: *When I was in Wollaston Lake we tried to show growth of each child relative to his or her earlier self rather than compared to others.*

Margaret's Reflection: *Teachers who I think are excellent teachers are sometimes teaching in ways that I would never be able to teach in, or never would want to teach in and yet I still consider them excellent teachers because of their relationship with their students and what they are able to do with their students.*

### .... To thine ownself be true and it follows as night the day

Transcripts: (pp. 198 - 199)
_.[3] This conversation reminds me of a story I wrote and rewrote as I tried to understand what I had done to myself, what had been done to me the year of the evaluation.

*The Evaluation*
*(Storying)*

*My experience with allowing outsiders to enter the inner sanctuary of my classroom has been overwhelmingly positive and almost entirely trouble free. Consequently, I have an open door policy and don't mind visitors, volunteers, student teachers, aides, colleagues or administrators coming into my room. In fact, I like the opportunity to have others share in my classroom experiences. I enjoy answering questions about my teaching and like the opportunity to talk about what I'm doing and my reasons for making certain*

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[3] The storyteller does not want to be identified and has chosen to share this story anonymously.

*choices. I believe that I am a good teacher and have confidence in the effectiveness of the curricular choices I have made. I like and respect my students and am almost always satisfied with the affection and respect they show for me. Therefore, all things considered, the year of the evaluation should not have caused me any undue stress or concern. That however was not the case.*

*While I did not lack confidence in myself or in the quality of the job I was doing, I did lack confidence in the evaluators, the evaluation process, and most specifically the philosophy and resulting terms of reference that were established to guide the process. After being inserviced on the evaluation process and the terms of reference in the year prior to the evaluation, I knew that "they" had a serious epistemological and pedagogical problem. But as the summer passed too quickly by, I had a growing realization that in September it would also be my problem. Nevertheless, I was fairly busy and managed to keep these unwelcome thoughts well submerged until the end of the summer when I started preparing for school. Entering my classroom and knowing that this was the year, I decided I had better at least reread the evaluation booklet. Even if I was still determined not to fall into line with the philosophy it espoused, it is always wise to scout out the enemy I thought. That was a mistake! I became angry all over again that someone could reduce my teaching to this, that someone could do this to me, and more determined than ever to resist the vision of education it supported. But amazingly, when I sat down later in the week to write out my plan for the first day of school, I did it according to the expectations set out by the evaluators. My plan book after all was to be entered as "Exhibit A" in the evaluation documents. Fine I thought, I can play their game on paper but it will not change my classroom reality for one minute. That, however, was not to be the the case.*

*Maybe I could have written out a detailed lesson plan with objectives, method, materials and evaluation procedures for each of the ten periods in the day and still managed to teach from an integrated perspective which belied what I had written for one day. But I could not do this day after day without beginning to feel controlled and squeezed into a very small and tight box - about the same size and scope as a class period on a weekly timetable grid. I could not just say I was doing certain things or evaluating in certain ways day after day without actually following through to some degree. Not when student work and evaluation records were to be kept on file for further document analysis. I could no longer welcome student input into themes and activities when detailed units were to be prepared in advance for the whole year. I could not facilitate the students' learning when I was expected to feed them my knowledge piece by measured piece. I could not be the kind of teacher I had to be when I tried to play the game by somebody else's rules. I might have thought I could be true to myself, my philosophy, and my principles while operating in a context of deceit, that however was not the case.*

*_.'s Reflection: As I wrote the story of the evaluation the first time, I was able to* *understand how I was unable to say I was doing one thing, while doing another. I was able to see the connection between "paying lip service" to an idea and a consequent change in my teaching practice.*

### *Thirty pieces of silver*
### *(Restorying)*

_. *It was the year of the evaluation when I first felt that it would not be in my best professional interest to be myself. Although I had always considered myself to be a good teacher and had many positive reports on my file, I knew that this was not the appropriate time to fight for my beliefs. Since my philosophy of education was markedly different from that of my evaluators, who had openly stated their biases, I deliberately set out to follow the guidelines that they had prepared for lesson planning, presentation and evaluation even though these methods were not my own and did not allow me to be myself. Normally, I would have defended my right to be myself and would not have backed down or even pretended that I was in agreement with something that went so strongly against my personal beliefs and professional knowledge. But on this occasion, I decided that I would not get the opportunity to be myself if I wanted to get a good evaluation report. I felt trapped and knew that I was going to be untrue to myself, so I rationalized that one week was not a long time to be involved in this deceptive act, even though it was preceded by months of planning. I even convinced myself that this event was a little like a visit from the Queen, (who was visiting that summer), and that I would only have to observe the expected protocol for a limited time. I thought that if I could put the whole experience in the context of "white lies," "socially acceptable' or "politically correct behaviour," I could "play the game" and do what was expected in this instance with little cost to my self in the process. But despite this rationalization, this week and the ones leading up to it were some of the longest in my life; and in contrast to my normal teaching day which flies enjoyably by with little attention to the clock, evaluation week ticked by one elongated minute at a time. I felt that I had betrayed my self, and although my evaluation was excellent, the "thirty pieces of silver" were small consolation for what I had given up.*

_.'s Reflection: *Although I had initially felt that my storying of the evaluation had captured why I saw this event as significant in my teaching life, as I continued to reflect on this experience I was able to see that it had not merely interrupted my practice, it had divided me from my self. It had forced me to play a publicly accepted role and, as I assumed this role, I betrayed who I was as a person and as a teacher.*

Research Journal: Although this incident occurred in the anonymous storyteller's life several years before she participated in this research group, the memory of the evaluation, its telling and retelling over a period of years, and its presentation in our research group became a political act which helped us question and challenge the limited form of education that this evaluation sought to enforce. As these stories were read and discussed in our research group, our understanding of evaluation became restoried personally, professionally and politically, and through this restorying it became apparent that knowing one's own truth can not set one free unless that truth becomes the basis and the impetus for action. We began to see that our understanding of middle space, needed to result in efforts to change those conditions which limit the middle space for students and for teachers.

Reflective Turn: In *Naming Silenced Lives* (McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993) Margaret D. LeCompte, explores the possibilities and difficulties for uniting the research tradition of storytelling (oral history, narrative biography, life-history ethnography) with social critique and activism. She suggests that in eliciting life stories, narrative researchers need to be engaged in more than naming and interpreting the conditions of oppression. ". . . Researchers must do more than to posit that 'ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free'" (p. 14), because self awareness is insufficient for emancipation. In order to bring about the empowerment and social change, LeCompte emphasizes "the need to frame narrative within a social, economic, political, and historical context. Further, as Gore (1990) points out, empowerment is not just a discourse or a state of mind. Empowerment requires the acquisition of the property of power and its exercise in the accomplishment of some vision or desired future condition" (p. 14). LeCompte reminds us that "bringing about change is not a quiet academic pursuit; to empower is to get into trouble" because it often "requires wrenching privileges away from entrenched interests -- even those privileges without which members of the Establishment feel they can not survive" (p. 15).

Zeichner (1993) also locates his work in the area of teacher education in the context of a larger political project which encompasses the school's responsibility to foster greater social justice. Recognizing that teaching and teacher education are not politically neutral acts necessitates that we "act with greater clarity about whose interests we are furthering in our work because acknowledged or not, the choices we make everyday as teachers and teacher educators reveal our moral commitments with regard to social continuity and change" (p. 2). However, in his research, Zeichner found that imposing critical content onto students' experiences did not result in changed practice as "most students did not connect their greater awareness of the reproduction of inequalities through schooling to their own school situations, or when they did, they often felt powerless to do anything about the situation" (p. 14). He, therefore, moved to a teaching approach where critical awareness grew out of students' reflections on the social and political dimensions of their own experiences.

## .... Changing the stories we live by

Transcripts: (pp. 86 - 90)
K. I think it's certainly up to us as educators to try to change the present methods of teacher and student evaluation. Today as I was observing one of my student teachers I noticed that when her grade six students were doing their group work, the girls were all being nice girls, all doing their work quietly and finishing their assignments in no time. I wanted to talk about this phenomenon as a gender issue. I wanted to bring it up as something we could discuss and wonder about together. But when the principal came in to evaluate this student teacher, he used very technical language. There was no room for any wondering in his discourse. He was saying things like, "Your timing, perhaps we could look at your timing or your pacing." All this technical language controlled what he was able to see. Here I was, wanting to talk about moral issues, things that I think are important to get student teachers to think about, but the principal was sitting there talking about timing, and all this other technical babble.
A. But don't you think the things he was mentioning, even though they might sound impressive and can certainly intimidate teachers, are at a fairly low level?
K. I do think they are low level skills, unfortunately I'm not the one who gets to set the agenda or the criteria for good teaching. (laughter - overlapping talk)
D. For our big teacher evaluations, not the ones done internally by the administrators, the external evaluators came armed with two sheets, thirty-two boxes, sixteen on a sheet, and the things they evaluated us on were mainly

low level Madeline Hunter type skills. (laughter). When I looked at the evaluation, I thought to myself, you're missing who I really am, (laughter) what a fantastic teacher I am! But you don't even know how to ask the right questions so how will you ever find out? Go ahead Kelly, I'm sorry!

K. I guess I'm just saying that we have to change the language. We have to change it. It's on the forms but.....(pause)

D. But those forms can really constrain what people look for when they come in to do an evaluation. If they're so busy trying to observe the things that will fit into thirty-two boxes it can not help but constrict and restrict their vision, what they are able to see.

K. But I think we all have to do something, even in some small way, to change it. I talked to the principal about the student teacher and I just said so okay perhaps her timing wasn't perfect today but did you notice these other kinds of things. This is grade six, their hormones are raging, but the way they dialogue in that room - you want to talk about space - it's a very nice space in that room. When I watched that student teacher, the way she is with thirty grade six students, her interactions and the kinds of things that are happening in her room, I would be perfectly comfortable putting my child into that room. But I find that it's up to me to tell him that she's an excellent student teacher, to tell him to look for this, and this, and this, and this. Have you thought about this and this, and this, and this? It might make a difference. It might not. But I know at least I tried. (right)

A. So much of evaluation is like the Emperor's new clothes, it sounds really impressive but it's really nothing (mmmhmm).

D. When our principal did what he called, "walk through evaluations" and wrote up his observations, I often found that his comments would be more genuine, that he had noticed some of the things that were also important to me in my teaching. But when he had to evaluate us on these forms, they cut down on what he was able to notice because the forms provided such a rigid framework. They were even more scary because they looked as if they were comprehensive and in that way they controlled what was seen and what was said. Nobody looked at them and asked, what is missing in this educational picture. The time it took to complete them precluded the evaluators from even wanting to ask what else they should be looking at.

L. I found it very hard as an administrator when someone would give me a form like that and expect me to use it. But speaking about meaningful evaluation, I had a couple of teachers who knew I was kind of anxious, and who every month or six weeks would throw something in my mailbox saying I noticed this or that, commenting on some aspect of my work.

A. Did they evaluate you?

L. Yes. But it wasn't evaluation in the big sense of the word, not the evaluation that gets done on us. (laughter) This was feedback as to what I was doing, supportive feedback, and I thought why aren't we doing more of this? Why don't teachers comment on the administrator's performance? Why is it all only one way, top down? It's like I'm up here and you're down there so I'm the one who does it to you. But I know as an administrator I really liked that feedback because you don't know if people are seeing the things you're trying to do, or if they're working, or if something is worthwhile or not. As an administrator I want to help construct a middle space for the teachers and students but I don't want to be left out of it either.

A. Do you do peer coaching in Alberta? Where you work with another teacher or an administrator and go into each other's classrooms to observe and discuss your teaching. The idea behind this was that you would support each other in improving your own teaching. In Saskatchewan they're really pushing that model.

L. But are they telling you what to look for?

A. No. Saskatchewan Education put out a book of information but it's up to the teachers how they will implement it. Administration supports it by covering one teacher's classroom so that she or he can go into another teacher's room and work with him or her - however you set it up. When it came out we had an inservice on it but everybody in our school was totally intimidated by the idea. No one wanted to do it. The principal and I did a little of it. It was hard because he didn't have a classroom. Most people though didn't want anyone in their room and didn't want the support. I guess maybe they didn't see it as support. But it was an interesting idea and I wondered if this model was used here.

M. I think seven years ago there was a real push for teacher effectiveness training in Alberta.

A. This is not that.

M. But I think the second step in the teacher effectiveness model was peer coaching.

L. Yes, we did some of that too.

K. You'd look for specific things?

M. Yes, timing, pacing, (over lapping talk and laughter)

A. The model in Saskatchewan was more open. It came out of the doctoral work of Sherry Miller. I thought it might be accepted by teachers because it allowed them to identify the things they wanted to work on rather than providing them with an externally developed checklist of good teaching. I thought it was a good idea but I don't think a lot came of it.

L. I think it's hard to mandate something like that. It seems like it is more effective when it happens informally, when the teachers decide it is something they want to do. I think it takes trust. I think that trust has to be there first. You know, I wouldn't want some people in my room and I wouldn't want to go into some people's rooms. And I definitely wouldn't want someone to tell me whose room I had to go into or who was coming into my room.

# PART III.
# RECLAIMING OUR TEACHING LIVES: RESTORYING OUR TEACHING PRACTICE

## .... Restorying the professional development landscape through collaborative storytelling

Research Journal: As we have constructed our knowledge of the middle space through our conversations and through our storying and restorying, I have asked repeatedly how participating in this research has been developmental for me and for the teachers in our group. As well as looking at the middle space, I hoped this research project would create a space where we could look at our own looking, a space of reflexivity where the process would be as significant as the product. Since teacher education in both the academy and the school reflects a sacred story of teacher as received knower rather than constructed knower (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a; Martin, 1994), a story which resonated with my own experiences of teachers' professional development, I wanted to explore collaborative storytelling as both a research methodology and as a place where teachers could be and become knowledge constructors. I wanted to make a link between this process and teachers' professional development, between this process and the middle space we construct with our students. How is collaborative storytelling developmental for teachers and for researchers? How does it provide for the valuing of our individual and collective knowledge of teaching? How do collaborative storytellers construct a middle space?

Transcripts: (p. 108)
A. So when did you get these transcripts done?
D. At noon today.
A. You did?
D. Yes.
K. You said about six hours, close to six hours . . .
D. From six until noon.

K. Isn't that something?
A. Wow, it took you just six hours to do them?
D. Oh no, that was just today - what I had left to finish up.
A. Oh, I was going to say,
D. I wish.
K. How much time does it take you?
D. I don't know for sure because I can't usually stay at it for that long. It's actually very difficult work, so I do other things in between (right), but it takes the better part of a week.
A. It's a lot of work it seems to me.
D. It is, but I think it's important to be able to read and reread our conversations and to restory our experiences with further reflections.
(The following conversation is overlapping but from what I can tell it all relates to the helpfulness of the transcripts and it ends. . .)
L. So you're finding it helpful?
A. Are you finding it helpful?
K. Yes, that was my question.
M. I was wondering that too.

Research Journal: Yes, I'm finding it helpful. But we need to discuss how meaningful these conversations and the transcripts are for everyone in our group. What are you getting out of this? Are the expectations you had when you joined our group being met? How useful do you think this type of interaction would be in a school context?

*Margaret's Reflection: I think a group like this would be very useful in a school but I doubt it could be created without a specific purpose. We met as strangers, each with our own agenda and not particularly vulnerable because of our limited contact. I don't know if that would be possible with an entire staff. A staff would have a lot more difficulty making it work, but if there was no space to discuss those things that would make you vulnerable, I don't know how helpful I would find the conversations.*

*Anne's Reflection: I am really enjoying the chance to discuss our teaching lives and the middle space we struggle to create. When I joined the group I was afraid that being on leave would be a problem, that I'd feel out of touch with what you discussed, but I don't feel that way now. The issues raised are so familiar to me, and that in itself is a source of encouragement. I think this sort of group would be great in a school context, if you had some people you were comfortable with on staff.*

Transcripts: (p. 72)

M. I wonder why we don't have a more cyclical approach to teaching and teacher education, an approach where teachers are in the classroom for a period of time and then they come out and then they go back in and then they come out and then they go back in? I wonder why teaching and teacher education are not seen as more than getting four years of education and then teaching until you burn out or retire. I think the way it's presently structured is wrong. You should be going in and out of university throughout your teaching career, at least every five years. Learning should be part of teaching. It should be mandatory. Even if a teacher's sabbatical leave was not spent at a university, it should be a time for a teacher to reassess his or her teaching life. This ongoing learning should be a requirement of teaching.

Response Journal: Margaret, I love your image of coming in and out of the classroom, of interweaving our teaching and our learning. I think we should ask though, if the out time, the time for learning should only occur every five years. I would like the time for reflection and the construction of new understanding to be a much more integral part of my teaching life. I do identify however, with your feeling that some time apart from the regular teaching day is needed if this is going to occur. While there is much written about the practice of teacher as researcher (Hollingsworth, 1994; Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennard, 1993; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), I think it is very difficult to research our practice while all the demands of that practice remain constant. When I engaged in classroom research with my grade one students (Schroeder & Hunsberger, 1988, 1989), in addition to my teaching duties, I found the workload overwhelming. I also felt assuming this dual role had ethical implications, since my time in the classroom was supposed to be spent teaching and interacting with students and my research activities, while conducted within the context of the teaching process, did distance me somewhat from the students.

But on the other hand, I think we need to ask if the university is the best place for this learning to occur. We need to ask, what kind of interactions would facilitate this learning and if the university is able to provide a space for these interactions to occur? Speaking of my own educational experience, I think too much of "being educated" put me in a position of receiving knowledge from an expert. I'm not saying that I don't think I can learn from other people, but there has to be room for me in the process of learning. There has to be space for me to connect the stories of my life to the experiences of others so I can reconstruct what I know. We need to ask how the sacred stories of both the school and the university shape teachers' professional development?

Reflective Turn: In exploring "The Promise of Collaborative Research In The Political Context", Connelly and Clandinin (1994a), say "promise resides in the potential for the political acts of collaborative research to change the political context of theory-practice relations between school and university" (p. 87). Focusing on the way that 'sacred stories' (Crites, 1971), such as the "theory-practice story in which the university is a place of knowledge and reflection and the school is a place of action" (p. 89), shape the 'mundane' stories that can be told in each of these contexts, Connelly and Clandinin explore how collaborative research can reshape our professional stories and our professional lives.

They suggest it is through collaborative research that we will be able to imagine a new relationship between research and teaching where teaching and research are no longer separated or hierarchically situated, but where we "define research in terms of teaching, and teaching in terms of research" (p. 96). As teachers and researchers reject the sacred stories of their respective professional knowledge landscapes and assume new roles in each other's stories, there is a possibility that their new stories will challenge the sacred story which posits teachers as consumers rather than producers of research. Because of this possibility, the authors see collaboration between schools and universities and the telling of new stories as political acts. The potential for altering the hierarchical relationships which currently exist through challenging the theory practice split embeds collaborative storytelling within political contexts at both the local and global level, and reframes our understanding of research and professional development.

Research Journal:[4] This research and our research group were based on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed. A constructivist epistemology provided a framework for our work together and our conversation constructed a space where we could learn from each other and with each other. In the process of telling and retelling our stories of teaching, we constructed knowledge in which practice and theory were intertwined, where the traditional hierarchical distinctions were not upheld. Neither the teachers nor the researchers'[5] knowing has been privileged. We recognize that such an approach challenges the established authority of the researcher and the status of theory. However, our experiences, as teachers and researchers, suggest that the developmental aspects of collaborative narrative inquiry occur because our storytelling allows us to construct a middle space where we can make connections between knowledge and experience, theory and practice.

One of my research questions grew out of my dissatisfaction with the way professional development was perceived and delivered to teachers and out of my desire to explore the potential of collaborative storytelling for constructing knowledge in both the research and professional development contexts. As a classroom teacher, I had worked extensively with other classroom teachers in the area of professional development. I had organized several teachers' conventions and conferences, settings where small groups of people decided the professional development for the large group and where my job was to identify and bring in the experts. These experiences, my subsequent involvement in negotiating time and space for individualized professional development, and my own experiences as both a graduate student and researcher, led me to a place of embodied knowing, to a place where I could understand how traditional views of knowledge, research and professional development were detrimental to my ability as a teacher to construct rather than consume knowledge. I also knew the educational systems I worked in provided little space, encouragement or reward for teachers to become actively involved in their own learning. Neither the school nor the university research community had adequately explored the potential for teacher development inherent in the collaborative narrative inquiry process. Further to this, I was convinced that those assumptions which led to labelling narrative research as "just teacher stories" rather than recognizing it as a way of interweaving theory and practice and therefore as developmental for teachers and researchers needed to be explored.

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[4] Excerpt from Schroeder, D. "Teacher and researcher development in collaborative narrative inquiry: Possibilities for restorying school-university partnerships," a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA., April, 1995.

[5] The researchers referred to include those inside and outside this study. As the knowing of outside researchers has been included in the text of this study as reflective turns, the intent has not been to provide support for or verification of our stories but to add other voices - who are thinking about related ideas - to our conversation. Our desire is to build connections, not to prove points.

Within our research group, collaborative storytelling functioned as a formal research methodology (as knowledge was socially constructed) and it provided both a means and a space in the middle whereby, and wherein, teachers could participate in their own professional development. However, several dilemmas and issues emerged in and around the context of this study. Although teachers are constantly telling stories as a way of making sense of their experiences, neither they nor many in the academy have realized the value of these stories or of the storytelling process in the construction of knowledge. The teachers in our group did not initially associate their storytelling with professional development. Even though they complained about the lack of time and space within the traditional professional development format to tell their stories and to talk to their colleagues about the things they thought were really important, when this time and space was provided, they did not see their collaborative construction and reconstruction of stories as learning, or as real professional development. Neither did they initially associate their stories or story telling group with research.

That these teachers did not see their storytelling as a legitimate way of coming to know and understand their practice and therefore something that could be seen as research or as professional development is not surprising. First, they had often witnessed the lack of spaces for their voices in the academy and in the educational literature. With me, they sensed their classroom stories were not welcomed as real knowledge.[6] Furthermore, with much of teachers' professional development based on the assumptions that knowledge is held by the expert (someone who is seen as already knowing a lot about something), and that it can be funnelled down the conduit to the practitioner (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Freire, 1990; Apple, 1993), they accepted that it was the teacher's role to receive and implement, not to question and actively engage in the construction of knowledge.[7]

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[6] See the conversation in the dissertation, Chapter 3, Part III, "Crossing borders".

Professional development which proceeds from such a received view of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) does not legitimate teachers' questions or the ways they come to understand and improve their classroom practices (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1990). As such, it distances them not only from their own stories but from their learning. They come to believe that knowledge is something they will receive from others rather than something they will create with others.

Educational research also separates teachers from their learning. Research "on" teachers and teaching practice, rather than collaborative research "with" teachers into their practice, positions the researcher as the expert who is distanced from findings seen as having an objective existence far removed from the subjective experiences of the teacher in the classroom. Locked within the plot of this sacred story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), the possibility that research can be developmental for the teacher and the researcher is not even a consideration. But a rejection of this structure by the researcher is not easy, and in this research project, I have found that in the process of letting the old story die (as they participate in living out a new story), teachers keep trying to reassign the university researcher to the role of expert.[8] Changing this hierarchical structure is not as easy as denouncing it. But as we work collaboratively, a middle space of possibility for both teachers and researchers to restory traditional methods of research and professional development opens up.

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[7] For our group's conversation about this see the story in this chapter, "Working together for wellness: A professional development story."

[8] As she tells about her experience with her student teacher, Kennard (1993) has explored the difficulty of restorying the expert-novice relationship from the perspectives of both the student teacher and the co-operating teacher.

## .... Making bigger spaces for each other

Lisa's Reflection : (Excerpts from a letter Lisa sent to Debbie along with the transcripts she had responded to, to that time.)

*August 25, 1993*

*Dear Debbie,*

*Here are some pieces for you. I'm doing this (reading and responding) a bit backwards, but it still is wonderful going over this again. Thank you for your call. I really needed a connection. Yours was a voice from heaven. I felt like I was in my balloon floating away again and you pulled me back. My journey continues. . .*

*Before I send you the rest of the transcripts I'd like to try to find the bit about collaboration. Kelly talked about it, something about collaboration as respecting differences. I want to explore that more - how our stories are constructed collaboratively. The ebb and flow of our conversations are a delight to me - to watch stories unfold that otherwise (without transcripts) would be left in the air.*

*Take care,*

*Lisa*

Anne's Reflection: (Excerpts from a letter Anne sent to Debbie along with her response to the first draft of Chapter 3 - the first chapter of the research story written.)

*December 29, 1994*

*Dear Debbie,*

*I had hoped to have this back to you before Christmas, but didn't quite make my deadline. . . It was good to read through your chapter and renew my acquaintance with the research group. I have jotted some comments in the margins - just thoughts, nothing very profound. I have often wondered about my role in the group. Not being a graduate student myself, I wasn't as used to talking on that metacognitive level and felt a bit peripheral. Anyway, I am interested in the progress of the writing and your writing is very readable.*

*I still would like to suggest an editing out of the "yas" and "mmmhmms". Another thing that came to mind while reading your chapter was the possibility of subtitles or something within the chapter, to highlight the specific points you're making. . . I don't know if you are wanting suggestions like this - just disregard them if you're not.*

*Something that struck me in reading this chapter (three) is that we didn't seem to tell as many stories about our practice as I'd thought. We "discussed" a lot. Will there be a place somewhere else in the paper for some of the stories? Or weren't there that many? Did our conversations just seem like stories?. . .*

*Best wishes for a happy New Year for you and your family,*

*Anne*

Research Journal:

Dear Anne,

I've really thought a lot about your letter even as I've tried not to think about it. Thinking that we had constructed a middle space where everyone felt central to our community, I felt sad to think that you had felt as if you were on the periphery, that your contributions were not as valuable as those of other teachers. I wonder if as you read and respond to the chapters in this book and hear your voice intertwined in our conversations, stories and reflections, you will restory your experience yet again. I wonder if you will feel that while your stories might be given back to you in ways which will cause you to rethink and restory them yet again, you will be able to see them as your own, you will feel that they were told in good company.

As I've worked and reworked our conversations in the writing of this research text, I've often thought how different this story would have been if any of our voices had been missing, how dependent the knowledge we have constructed was upon the stories each person shared and the conversation we engaged in together. But at the same time as I've realized the uniqueness, the situatedness of our storied knowledge, I've also felt that these stories are not unique. They are the stories that other teachers are living and telling each day. Our stories will resonate with their stories, with the stories we share as teachers and as women teachers in elementary schools.

I appreciated your suggestion to include subtitles, and have since put them into chapter three and the other chapters as well. While I had our transcripts sorted before I began to write, I don't write from an outline and usually write the whole thing before I go back and put them in for the reader. With some sadness, I have also omitted all of our "yas" - in some places replacing them with "yes" which just doesn't seem to convey the same feeling of encouragement and support the more informal "ya" did! Please continue to comment on both form and content.

Although I admit to doing some "metacognitive stuff" as I have tried to resituate our particular stories in multiple contextual frames so we can see things which might have seemed natural (thus invisible) in new ways, I want this story to be accessible to teachers. I want it to help others restory their teaching lives in a middle space which seeks to include and integrate rather than exclude and separate. I want the teachers who read and who discuss our story to enter into this conversation which has made space for our voices, our listening, our wondering and our knowing. So even though this research story is being written as I continue my life as a classroom teacher, I need confirmation that my restorying reflects the lives and the conversations of the teachers who first storied it and that in so doing it invites other classroom teachers to join our conversation.

Thanks for your help,

Debbie

Transcripts: (pp. 73 -77)
L. You talked about how we are sorting through the notion of what the middle space is for ourselves in this group and about how our conversation and storytelling creates a middle space for us. This made me wonder about the part we play in the stories of other teachers. Are we helping them create middle spaces for themselves or are we keeping them from finding spaces that are comfortable? I think the hardest part of teaching for me right now is that I feel so alone. I have fun with the kids. They are wonderful. They make my day, they make my life but they don't take away from the feeling of professional alienation I have in this school. It helps a little to know I don't have to stay here next year, that my assignment in this school will only last for six months. I know that I would not be able to work like this again in September. It would not be happening. I would have to find someone to connect with because I know I can't do this all by myself. It's too lonely. I don't understand why we are all working in isolation in this school and I wonder if there's a way we can start making bigger spaces for each other?

### .... Creating communities of support

A. I think what you're experiencing can be related to the ratio of new and old teachers in a school. Unless we make an effort to the contrary, teaching tends to be done in isolation so if there's no turnover, teachers tend to become isolated. A group of new people coming into a school can really make a difference because they haven't gone to their rooms and shut their doors yet. Even if you're not part of the new group, you can be exposed to new ideas and to a climate where people work together as they're trying to figure everything out. Through these connections, there is a possibility to get energy sparking. I think though, if just one new teacher comes into a school where teachers work by themselves rather than collaboratively it can be an overwhelming experience and a very lonely experience as Lisa has found out this year.

L. Yes, and I've found that when teachers have withdrawn from each other, and are working in isolation they also withdraw from the kids and school becomes an us and them situation.

D. I know what you're saying, but I'm not comfortable with connecting this withdrawal from colleagues and kids with the age of the teacher. I think there is a reason, other than age why older teachers typically work alone. I think we have to look at how the system works against teachers' collaboration, how the work of teachers as currently structured and mandated divides us from our selves and from our colleagues. I think new teachers who have not experienced this divisiveness are more likely to try to work together and I think teachers who have not had change imposed on them are more likely to want to work toward their own change. But I think a teacher's age is only a factor insofar as it contributes to the number of divisive, alienating and negative experiences that a teacher is likely to have encountered over the years.

L. I can see that change in the staff in this school. There has been a huge change between the first time I taught there in 1982 and this time. There were a lot of new teachers there in 1982 and the school just seemed to buzz. Greg came to visit a couple of weeks ago and even he noticed the change. He said, "Their shoulders are really drooping." They are drooping. And it's pretty well the same core who started twelve years ago.

D. I want to share a story.

*I found that as a new teacher, I was working fairly much on my own. We did form a county wide group of grade one teachers because we had to implement a new reading series which was causing some anxiety, but generally in the school everyone stayed in their own rooms doing their own thing. Sharing was not very common. In fact as a profession we seemed to look down on teachers who copied other teachers and a spirit of competition rather than cooperation permeated our relationships.*

*In the midst of this, however, I began to work with Pat, one of the "older" teachers. It started very informally in conversations where we shared work our students had done and talked about some of the things we were doing that seemed to work well and about other things we saw as obstacles to children's learning and so wanted to change. The feeling that we were good teachers created a safe space for us. We didn't have to pretend that we had everything figured out to protect our competence. Together and over many years, we came to know what whole language meant. We read, attended workshops, I* *did my master's degree in early language and we learned in the contexts of our classrooms and our collaborative relationship. We made space for each other and for ourselves to learn. We gave each other support and we listened to each other and we got excited for each other and with each other. We tried things out and changed our practice many times as we constructed and reconstructed new understandings. Nobody was making us do anything. There had been no external judgment saying that we needed to change or to improve. We evaluated what we were doing and we directed and assessed our own changes. We didn't learn about whole language from a book or from an inservice, we learned and continue to learn what it is through our teaching and through the stories of our students and our students' parents.*

Margaret's Reflection: *Therein lies the rub. You were part of a community and there was no one else assessing right or wrong, just the two of you striving to improve your own practice. Evaluation was part of the process not something imposed from the outside. This self-evaluation is vital in teachers' professional development.*

L. But what happens to stop that? What happens to people who may have worked and lived and thought like that for awhile and who then retreat to the isolation of their own classrooms. This is the third school where I've seen this. That's certainly not enough to generalize from, but it does make me wonder why this happens.
M. It's happening at our school right now.
D. Isn't it related to a breakdown in community, almost?
M. In our school there's a big hew and cry about how much work we have to do. Teachers are saying they don't want to do things. They are getting into a downward spiral and it's pulling everyone down.
A. Last year our school went through a process of making school goals. It was interesting and frustrating. I was really hoping we would develop a goal related to literacy in the school but instead everything ended up being directed toward creating less work. That became the top priority. I felt like my enthusiasm was being drained by teachers who didn't really want to be there.
M. I think tiredness has a lot to do with it. I think when you're tired the work, what you perceive as being work, changes. So things that used to be exciting and enervating now become work. And once it all becomes work you're loathe to do it. I don't think the tasks necessarily change but your perception changes. This perception drags people down. If the staff is really, really tired and a new person comes on the scene who reminds us what it is like to be connected with kids, we avoid that person. We make that person feel unwanted because we don't like to be reminded of what we could be but no longer are.

Margaret's Reflection: *I like this part. Community going downhill together.*

L. And since we're in an open area school we're all pulling each other down all the time.
M. That is probably why it's a little more hostile than it would be if you were not so visible. Anything different or innovative draws everyone's attention and criticism.
L. It just really surprised me. It is hostile. It is really sad.
A. So do you think those teachers are too tired to support each other?
L. Maybe, I also think some are bored (yes) because they've been doing the same things, even using the same series of textbooks since 1982. That is long gone. I'd be bored too if I taught the same text for more than ten years. But why have they allowed the curriculum and their teaching to become so narrowly defined? They aren't learning and they aren't creating a middle space for their students to learn either.

Reflective Turn: As I continued to think about Anne's story of feeling peripheral to the group, the relationship between older and new teachers in our communities of practice and the place of collaborative storytelling in professional development, I was reminded of the thinking of Lave & Wenger (1991) as presented in *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* In this book the authors discuss learning as situated in our social relationships, in the coparticipation and conversations of individuals in contexts which include a space for legitimate peripheral participation. They state that "newcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an 'observational' lookout post: It crucially involves participation as a way of learning" (p. 95). Through extending the concept of apprenticeship beyond a hierarchically positioned master-apprentice relationship formed for the purpose of learning a set of predetermined skills, Lave & Wenger have presented an image of apprenticeship and peripheral participation which can "capture very well our interest in learning in situated ways - in the transformative possibilities of being and becoming complex, full cultural-historical participants in the world" (p. 32). It is this transformative possibility which leads me to hope that Anne can restory herself in our research story, that she can reposition herself in our narrative.

These authors also propose that what is known and what can be known in any situation/practice is mediated by the coparticipants. They see both the coparticipants and the object to be known as changing in the process of learning. Their theory of learning is embedded in a framework of action, language and improvisation. Within this framework, legitimate peripheral participation creates a space where participants can engage in interactive processes and practices, in learning, (a term which these authors use and which I refer to as the social construction of knowledge) rather than in the transmission or receiving of factual knowledge about the world. Describing legitimate peripheral participation as community membership which is constituted by the participants changing locations, perspectives and identities, the authors argue against reducing learning to a linear notion of skill acquisition or defining participation as complete or partial and place in relation to a "uniform or univocal 'center'" (p. 36).

By viewing social practice as the "primary, generative phenomenon" Lave and Wenger position learning as one of the characteristics of social life. Taking learning to be an integral aspect of practice rather than merely situated in practice, learning can be understood as "an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world" (p. 35). However, while such a theory posits learning as situated within the particularity of time and task, the authors remind us that generality and abstract representations are "meaningless unless they can be made specific to the situation at hand" . . . and that "any 'power of abstraction' is thoroughly situated, in the lives of persons and in the culture that makes it possible. On the other hand, the world carries its own structure so that specificity always implies generality. . . that is why stories can be so powerful in conveying ideas" (pp. 33 - 34).

## .... Working together for wellness:
## A professional development story

Transcripts: (pp. 112 - 113)

M. *We just had a professional development day. Part of it was on teacher wellness. We had to make a collage. I hate this kind of thing but we had to do it anyway. We had to make a collage that would be representative of ourselves out of old magazine pictures. Anyway, there's a woman on staff that I like to work with. She's an artist in her other life. So I asked her if she would like to do it together since it would be more interesting than doing it on our own.*

*We decided we would make a collage based on our common interests. We gradually got to know quite a bit about each other through doing it. For example, if she picked an apple out of a magazine she had to find out if I would be willing to have that symbol identified with me. I enjoyed it immensely, both what I learned about this other teacher and what I learned about artistic artistic arrangement from working with her. I also thought that this activity would a great opener for the beginning of the year, much more fun than some of the things we do now to get to know each other. But . . . Well, I mean okay, fine. It was interesting, but I don't like that, when I spend my professional development day doing that. When I go to PD I want to learn something. I don't want it to be wishy-washy touchy-feely (psycho babble).*

Research Journal: Was this activity successful because there was some middle space provided by the instructor in that you could personalize the assignment to make it meaningful to you? Is the invitation to personalize our learning this way, part of what we understand as middle space? Did your decision to work together also contribute to your satisfaction? And were you as "students" creating middle space?

*Margaret's Reflection: Yes, without a doubt. We felt doubly good because we'd filled the requirement yet maintained our individuality.*

Research Journal: Margaret, I can understand why you don't like someone else choosing what activities you will do on your professional development day, but I wonder why, when you found a space within this activity where you could collaboratively construct meaning with another teacher, you did not perceive this use of your time to be worthwhile? I wonder why you have come to believe that professional development should involve the presentation of information for you to learn rather than a middle space for you to construct your own knowing personally and with others?

Reflective Turn: Clandinin & Connelly (1995) help us think about this question in their book *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*. They tell us that traditional stories of teacher education have contributed to "teachers (who) begin teaching having been taught they have incomplete knowledge. In this view, they need to continue to learn through returning to the university for professional development" (p. 71). Knowledge, in this story, resides in the research and theories of their professors and other educational experts, not in the practice of teachers. When applied to professional development, the authors propose that this "sacred theory-practice story" which has separated theory and practice and positioned theory within universities and practice within schools, has led teachers to believe that they can only learn as they are taught by experts. Within this story, they can not see the possibilities of learning from their own practice/ stories or from the practice/stories of their colleagues. Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly state that "professional development, according to the sacred story, is not an occasion for enjoyment, it is serious business. It is not an occasion for informal activities in personal settings, but a time for formal activities in professional settings" (p. 127). Thus while teachers can and do learn from their own practice and in conversation with each other, they do not see the meaning they are constructing as knowledge or their "informal" conversations and storytelling as professional development.

Transcripts: (p. 115)

*Anne's Reflection: I think the professionalism of teachers is an important point in the discussion of middle space and professional development. What is professionalism to us? What will permit a middle space to flourish for each of us?*

Transcripts: (pp. 188 - 200)
A. In my last school I felt really lonely because everyone else seemed to be in a different mind set from me.
L. When I read back through these transcripts and reflected on the tee shirt issue and the hat issue I felt lonely too. And now there is the elastic band issue. When the principal came to me about the elastic bands I felt that my identity as a professional was being questioned. The incident was so trivial and so unimportant to the big picture. And in reality, an elastic band problem did not even exist. I just said, kids take your elastic bands home and they took them home. I don't want them snapping other kids. That's not acceptable. But for petty and isolated incidents like this to become the focus of our attention is not acceptable either. Instead of remarking in a quiet aside to me, "I noticed some of your kids had elastic bands and a couple of the kids on the playground are worried about them, just keep your eyes open," he stepped in and disciplined the students with me right there, as if I wasn't there.
A. And didn't he also say to you, that you've been out of teaching too long?

(yes) That's a real put down. That is not treating you with respect or like a professional.
K. It must be hard for him though, to see you have a wonderful relationship with your class and maybe not understand how you're doing it ...
L. But he knows me from before
D. What kind of a teacher is he?
L. The principal? I haven't a clue, he hasn't taught in ten years. (overlapping conversation) But at the same time I've come back into that school with some administrative experience which really has changed my view of things too, in a lot of ways. I now have more of a sense of responsibility for the whole school than I ever did before. Before I had worked as an administrator, all I really cared about was my classroom. Now I have much more sense of how important it is for all of us to feel connected to each other, for all of us to work to construct a belonging space for the whole school. When the principal comes up to me and makes a fuss about a few elastic bands, I think, but Curtis, they're reading like crazy. You should just see what they're reading. You should see the things that are happening in this room. You should read their writing. You should hear the things that are happening. We just had parent teacher interviews last week and a couple of parents in particular were so supportive and so thrilled with the stories their kids were bringing home. I have a boy who is kind of lagging in reading and writing as far as what the other kids are doing, but when I looked at the piece that he wrote in January and the his writing today, it's just night and day and this is in two months. That's what I feed on and that's what I live on. That's what is important to me and that's what I want to focus on.

Research Journal: Is this "belonging space" for the whole school and for everyone in the school middle space? What is belonging space?

Anne's Reflection: *This whole school middle space is critical to that of one's classroom, I feel. What makes it or breaks it? It's a fragile balance. The staff, the students, the administration, occasionally central office or parents. The administration is a focal point for sure, as we have discussed. The makeup of the staff is too, in a more subtle, elusive way. There isn't I don't think, a formula one could use in employing staff, to get the right mix necessarily, but from what we've talked about it is possible to think about and to imagine multiple possibilities for creating a middle space, for creating a space for teachers' professionalism and their professional development.*

L. Actually, as different as the grade six teachers are, when my students are doing something they're not supposed to do, I feel quite comfortable with the other two teachers talking with them or to me. If the other grade six teachers came up to me and said, oh I found these elastic bands in Travis's hand and I've dealt with it, or you might want to follow it up, or whatever, I wouldn't feel threatened. I feel like our responsibility is shared. That teacher was with the child at the time and saw it happen so he was the person who dealt with it because he knows the kids too. Whereas with the principal's intervention, it was very much a message to me as much as it was a message to the kids.

Research Journal: What can we say about this emotional safety - or is it professional safety - in the middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: Emotional safety, it's another important point for students, for teachers. Back to that word respect. The teacher has to feel safe, trusted, maybe first, if she is to pass that on to students. In the last school I taught in, I felt I did not have this safety. There wasn't the trust and respect among the staff and this did make it harder to maintain the integrity, the wholeness of the middle space in my classroom.*

D. When I started to teach grade one, there was a teacher on staff who was constantly supervising my supervising. I didn't particularly like supervision and the last thing I cared about was how somebody else did their supervision. But she cared very much how other people were handling things. I guess Lisa, like you were saying, she felt a responsibility for the whole school. The problem however, was that this feeling of responsibility did not translate into the creation of a belonging space. She, instead, assumed responsibility for creating a conforming space. She would also walk right into my classroom and bawl my kids out in front of me or bawl me out in front of my kids and parents. I always had at least one or two parents in my classroom. But this didn't stop her. She felt it was her right and responsibility to walk into my room and tell me what to do. My own children were eight and ten, but because I was new to the school, I was treated "like a child myself" which unfortunately all too often translates into "with no respect".
L. I thought about that a lot today too. It's almost as if they're saying I don't trust you. You are not meeting my expectations. I want you to justify what you are doing. It makes me want to explain all the things that are going on in my head, all the reasons as to why I am or am not doing something, that I am making conscious choices and that those choices are my professional responsibility.

Research Journal: This makes me think again about the importance of trust and shared responsibility in creating a middle space in schools and classrooms. If you don't trust me or if I don't feel I am trusted, how much middle space do I have in my classroom or in the school community? I think in our stories, both Lisa and I felt our classroom space had been violated and that there was not a supportive space, a belonging space, for us in the school.

K. As you were talking Lisa, I couldn't help thinking that the experience with the elastics, embedded as it was in the unsupportive context of your school, could have lead to your doubting of yourself, to a loss of your professional identity. I think in these situations, in schools like these, it would be difficult not to conform. It would be difficult to maintain your professional integrity.

A. I have been in a school like Lisa's, only I was there for two years rather than six months. Toward the end of it (and now upon even further reflection), I can see how it did really change me. There certainly was an effect. I have a story that fits into our conversation. I don't know if it's a good time to read it. I don't want to cut you off at all. . .

L. Do.

A. But it does relate to what we're saying.

L. But you know, as much as you would feel that you changed, and maybe not in a very good way, there's probably somebody there who changed because of you.

K. Oh, I don't know about that.

A. I don't know about that either. I would like to think that (yes, it would make the suffering worthwhile right?) but some people seem like rocks, kind of impervious to change. Things just wash off them. So I don't think unfortunately, that I could really say I'd made a difference in that school. Which makes it all the worse I guess. Hopefully, Lisa you will feel that you've done something in your school to change it, to help create more middle space for the students and for the teachers.

L. Well Donna said she'd really love to read Atwell's book because she needed some new ideas about writing. So I said here take it. I'll get another one. Donna may not change. Donna is who she is and she's been teaching for a long time. But she's going to read that book and I know something is going to either be a burr (laughter) or she'll just see things a little differently. So I think, I won't be there in September but I hope that by being there, by trying to construct a middle space with my students, in spite of the conflicts it has created, I've made some difference in the middle space that might be created for some student next year. And I know that while the last six months have been difficult, the experience in the school and my storying and restorying of it in this group has also changed me. Feeling the lack of middle space and seeing how important that middle space of a school is to the relationships and the curriculum I can construct with my students, really reaffirmed what I believe in. It allowed me to see how important it is for me to keep learning and growing. I'll be quiet. Read us what you wrote Anne.

*A. I will.*[9] *I picked up one of Jeff's magazines called* *__Educational Leadership__*. *The topic this month was professionalism. One article said that teachers do not tend to see themselves as professionals and to quote from the article: "While no less devoted to their clients' welfare or to delivering them the*

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[9] Anne begins to tell and read us a story which I have retold with inserts from my research journal and her later reflections.

*best services in the classroom, teachers more often speak of professionalism in terms of environmental conditions than of standards and disposition." This struck me as scary and I wondered does this mean teaching must be standardized and quantifiable in order to be considered professional? Does this mean that teachers do not realize the impact they have on so many lives? I don't really like the term "professionalism." It sounds formal and rigid but I wonder without some sense of professionalism, what happens to the teacher in the classroom, the students and the middle space - or even the provisions and promise for a middle space. It made me think of the teacher Lisa spoke of a couple of meetings ago. The behaviour of that teacher in attaching negative labels to the students in her class for example, seemed unprofessional. The articles and Lisa's story brought to mind some things from my own teaching so I wrote some thoughts down to share tonight.*

Research Journal: Can teachers be professional if there is no middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: Or is allowing others to have this middle space something we might name professionalism?*

*A. Actually there are two stories I want to tell. In the first story I very strongly felt my role as a professional whereas, in the second one I felt I was pretty well swept along in a tide of unprofessionalism. For four years I had the good fortune to teach with eleven really dedicated teachers in Wollaston Lake. We were professionals in many respects, I feel. We read, brought in guest speakers and watched videos and films to improve our teaching practice. We learned as much as we could about whole language, about English as a Second Language (ESL), about the Dene culture in which we lived, about women's issues. We watched National Film Board (NFB) films about women - "Behind the Veil" stands out in my mind. We discussed dilemmas that arose in these stories and documentaries. We also worked very hard in our own classrooms, in each other's classrooms and as a school to do the best we could for the students. We even gained the confidence to begin a whole language newsletter in northern Saskatchewan which included themes we'd designed and reviews of recent books. We formed a northern chapter of the provincial Reading Council and became quite involved in that. For the group of teachers who were involved, this was a really special time in our lives, a time of collaboration and cooperation. We chose the things we were interested in learning more about and decided which aspects of our practice we wanted to focus on. As I was reflecting on professionalism, this story came to my mind. I think it is important to this research conversation because all of the things I mentioned enhanced my professionalism and strengthened my identity as a professional. They made my classroom a better place to be. The middle space I was able to create with my students was richer because of my own learning, my ongoing professional development, and because of the ways in which I* *was able to work collaboratively with the other teachers in my school.*

Research Journal: As I read your story Anne, it seems that it can help us think about one of the questions I asked when we began this inquiry: How can a storytelling group, such as the one we have formed, impact on the middle space teachers create in their schools, and in what ways is the middle space constructed in both the school and the group important to teachers' professional development and professionalism?

*Anne's Reflection: I think storytelling groups such as this one, and for me the group I was in in Wollaston Lake are really enabling and have a very positive impact on a teaching staff. I find this type of discussion very helpful - transforming even.*

*A. And back to that Educational Leadership magazine, one of the articles also mentioned as well as professionalizing teaching, efforts must be made to enrich and enhance pedagogy if significant educational changes are to occur. I think myself that one comes with the other and that if you're a teacher who is sincere about teaching you're going to be working toward improving your own pedagogical knowledge. The improvement of teaching that resulted because we were acting in what I would call a professional manner in Wollaston Lake showed that the professionalism of teaching and teaching practice aren't separate entities.*

Research Journal: Anne, I think you have made an extremely important connection between the professionalism of teachers and good pedagogical practice. I think this is something we really need to stress at this time when the movement toward a results-based curriculum is being mandated by the Alberta Provincial Government. If administrators, superintendents, school boards, the government department of education and others in society who state their intention to improve results through improved teaching practice deprofessionalize teachers in the process, they may find the quality of education provided in the schools is lowered rather than improved. I think your story might also cause us to rethink professional development which does not respect the teacher as a professional, as we try to imagine a new story for the teachers in our schools.

*A. The second story I want to tell you is about my most recent teaching* *experience in La Ronge. It is vastly different from my story of Wollaston Lake. I went blithely into this new school expecting more of the good experiences I'd had in my last school. I expected democratically run staff meetings, sharing and enthusiasm among the teachers, a fair bit of curricular freedom and a supportive administration. But I soon found out that things were going to be different here. The interest seemed to be in doing things as quickly and as easily as possible so the staff would have more free time which translated as time away from school. (laughter) There were no groups of teachers who met to discuss current educational trends, social issues or even school based activities. Each teacher was in his or her own little world cut off from one another and it was lonely.*

Research Journal: I wonder if this is how students feel too when they come to school and find no place or space to connect the private with the public? If we learn and construct meaning socially, how does this alienation of self impact on the pedagogical landscape we are living in?

*Anne's Reflection: It is critical for students' self-identity and self-concept that they be in a space where they are able to connect their private and public lives.*

*A. Social commentary could be rude and hurtful among the staff, cliques gathered in corners of the staff room to gripe about others. It was not a happy and not a professional place.*

Research Journal: As we're thinking about storytelling groups like ours meeting for professional development purposes, do we also need to think about how this group is different from a group which "gathers in corners....to gripe about others." What makes us different?

*Anne's Reflection: Touche. It is easy to get up on a moral high horse and lose perspective. After all, perspective is everything. The people who have a very different teaching philosophy from me are essentially no better or no worse. We need to ask how we can create spaces and places for students and teachers to learn.*

Reflective Turn: Pat Hogan (1995) has written about her experience as a member of one of three professional development groups formed by the teachers in her school at the instigation of her school principal. The "Teacher As Researcher" group to which Pat belonged used reflective journals to guide discussions about their teaching and classrooms. She says, "The early meetings in our group were tentative affairs. We did not yet know who in the group we could trust or what kind of talk would be politically correct" (p. 112). In this context, her attempts to address things she was concerned about in the school were initially "met with some suspicion and concern that our meetings might turn into 'bitch sessions,'" (p. 112). In responding to the story told by Pat, Clandinin & Connelly (1995) suggest that this concern arose as secret stories were made public within the safety of the group. They propose that the unease of the teachers in the group and in the school was created by a sacred story which turns "the telling of classroom stories into the telling of 'war stories' and acts of gossip" (p. 128) and state that the guilty feelings of the group members and criticisms of the other staff members were motivated by moral concerns "that people are not acting properly with respect to one another" (p. 128).

Although this group had formed with administrative approval, it did not conform to the plot line of the sacred story which placed teachers' stories in the role of gossip or unprofessional conduct. Pat's story shows as much as it tells how, if left unexamined, the sacred stories (policies) which order and control the world of school, can unconsciously sabotage efforts to transform and reform schools. Oliver Sacks (1990), in the introduction to *Awakenings* says that in writing this book he was involved in a long "struggle of escape from habitual modes of thought and expression" (p. xix). He argues, while understanding the new ideas is not difficult, escaping from the old ones, (p. xix) is not a simple matter of awakening to a new reality. It is, as Madeleine Grumet (1988) says, a struggle to repudiate what is, and "in so doing, reclaim our minds and bodies from the entrapment in this so-called natural order of things" (p. 184).

*A. Our administrators were two very timid men who generally stayed in the office. Once a year the principal would perform the onerous duty of observing us in our classrooms for half an hour (laughter). He was more relieved than we were when it was over for the year and he could go back into his office. The effect that all of this had on my ability to construct a middle space in my classroom was cumulative I feel. At first I didn't really realize how differently I was beginning to teach. My centre-based readers and writers' workshop made my classroom totally different from the other kindergarten classroom where the* *students did all their readiness skills in order and where they often watched films or filmstrips after recess that were unrelated to anything they were doing. But this was just the curriculum content area, the social interaction was another whole issue. I was shocked at the lack of respect the teachers showed for the students.*

*However, as time went on, and I was the only one in our division to teach so non-traditionally, I really began to feel uncomfortable. I began to spend more time making cute stuff with the kids to hang up or to take home. We would sometimes go watch a film with the other kindergarten classes, which I'm ashamed to say I no longer previewed first. I began to feel that my standards and my professionalism were slipping. I know they did. There was a corresponding effect on the middle space of my classroom. The children did many more teacher-directed activities my second year there. The freedom, which is a nebulous term I know, was lessened considerably. As I reflect on this experience, I can see that this school with its lack of middle space, its lack of collaboration and teacher motivated professional development had a definite negative impact on me as a professional and consequently on my teaching. I wonder sometimes where I'd be, how much more being in this school would have affected my ability to be a good teacher, if I hadn't had the stories from my first school to think about, if I hadn't been able to imagine other possibilities for practice and professionalism.*

L. You know the whole professionalism issue came up for me today when Curtis came into my room about the elastic bands.
A. That was very unprofessional.
L. I thought how do we as a society view professionals. Lawyers and doctors are viewed as professionals and Greg as an engineer is a professional. These professionals don't have someone looking over their shoulders or constantly telling them that what they are doing is all wrong. I think part of the dilemma of being a teacher comes from the fact that we are expected to give professional service under very unprofessional conditions. I also thought that I'm finding it hard to work in this particular school because it's been a long time since I've worked in a school where the administration is up there and they know more and better than we know, and the teachers are the little people down below. I know that I can't work in that school again. I can't live that way because you're right Anne, it changes to at least some degree who you are as a teacher.
A. I made those changes without consciously thinking okay, I'm going to be more like the other teachers. I didn't really think that I would do that. But since I've had the opportunity to reflect on these two experiences, I think I would be more conscious of trying to maintain my own identity. I hope I would. But being part of a school like that, when I look back on it now, did have that wearing down effect on me. I would get tired of saying no I'm not coming to a film today, or no I'm not doing something else and getting weird looks.
L. It's hard when there is nobody else to work with.
A. I think in the two years I was there, I maintained most of the integrity of my

classroom. Things changed a bit but I think if I had stayed there for twenty years the middle space in my classroom would have been gone. It would eventually just be eaten away if I wasn't able to renew my own sense of professionalism.
L. But all it takes is one person who you can connect with and to talk to. Two people can create a pocket of middle space, even in a school with no middle space.
A. I agree. Even by our last year in Wollaston Lake, because of the high turnover of teachers in northern schools, there were a lot fewer of those great teachers who I had worked with at first but even having a few teachers to work with was enough to maintain our professionalism.

Reflective Turn: While not wishing to dismiss the role that reflection in and on practice plays in teachers' ongoing and individual construction of professional knowledge, Clandinin & Connelly (1995), suggest that "the possibilities for reflective awakenings and transformations are limited when one is alone. Teachers need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways in the safety and secrecy of the classroom" (p. 13).

I would like to further suggest that the need for these others is especially necessary for teachers on the current Canadian professional knowledge landscape (Barlow & Robertson, 1994), a landscape which does not value professional knowledge as held by the experts let alone as constructed by teachers, a landscape on which the awakenings and transformations of teachers play no part. Barlow & Robertson suggest that current school reform based on the corporate agenda of privatization rather than on "a reconciliation of school and community" (p. viii) has resulted in a teaching profession flattened "between a rock and a hard place" (p.16). At a time when many teachers no longer perceive their classrooms to be safe places on the landscape alienation from other teachers in their schools is especially problematic in terms of both the professional well being and practice of teachers.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1990, 1993) and Craig (1992, 1995) speak of building knowledge in communities of teachers. These authors see knowledge communities as places where teachers are engaged in a common search for meaning in their work and as a site for the construction of local knowledge. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) also analyze the work done by teachers in a number of knowledge communities as they explore how teacher research functions to construct knowledge for the larger educational community, and look at the transformative potential of the knowledge generated in these communities for both the knowledge base and the inclusion of teachers in the company of those who know about teaching. As the movement toward "results-based curricula" and accountability gains impetus and the increasing number of external expectations, prescriptions and evaluations which are arriving on the school landscape almost daily continue to demoralize and deprofessionalize teachers, my hope is that collaborative groups of teachers will be able to construct a middle space, a space where teachers in conversation and in relationship will be able to story their practice and restory the possibilities for teaching and learning.

## .... Constructing our teaching selves

Interwoven through our conversations each time we met, were stories of our experiences with student teachers and with student teaching. It seemed that something in these student teaching experiences kept drawing us back, back to our own experiences as student teachers, back to the formation of our own identities as teachers. As Margaret and Lisa shared stories of their experiences as co-operating teachers and of the student teachers who were in their classrooms, and Kelly shared stories about her experience as a practicum advisor we wondered how we could restory and reconstruct the practicum experience. Because even as they drew us back, these stories also drew us forward to a place where we could imagine new stories of teacher education and development.

Transcripts: (pp. 116 - 118)
A. Jeff was working with a group called the cohort group. It seemed that the thrust of that program was to get more of the practical worked into the university class work, to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Margaret's Reflection: *It is easier to identify when this could happen in the program than to think how it could be done.*

*Anne's Reflection: So often, student teachers see only the traditional mode of teaching as an option with its very boxed-in, minimal middle space. We need to show them alternatives, through both the classrooms they visit as students teachers and the university classrooms in which they are students.*

K. It really depends on the school though. I can tell two very different stories of the practicum experience as seen from my perspective as the university advisor.

*K. I see a world of difference between the way the student teaching experience was structured in the school I was in last term and this term, in the way each particular school set it up. Last term the students I was supervising circulated around the school for the first week. They went into a number of classrooms to observe. At the end of each day, they would talk with each other and with the principal to discuss the things they had noticed. He was very involved and took a lot of time to deal with things that came up the first couple of weeks. Because of this introduction, the students were very much engaged in reflecting on the connections between theory and practice throughout their practicum. The school and the practicum experience were very much like a community. People worked and learned together. When I'd come in, it was not as the expert coming in from the university. I became part of the community. It was wonderful.*

*This term, I'm in another school. There are three teachers involved with the three student teachers. The student teachers didn't do any circulating around the school. They didn't become part of the school community. The school operated on a closed door policy. The student teacher was assigned to a co-operating teacher and that's where she stayed for the six weeks. It was a completely different experience. The sense of community and the sense of inquiry into practice were missing.*

L. I started out in a community of teachers as a student teacher. I started with one woman but eventually I worked with all three teachers at that grade level. Because they worked so closely as a grade, I became part of their community. I hadn't thought of that story until I started to write my own story for my thesis. Through that writing, I came to understand that my desire to make connections with other teachers goes back to that experience. That first experience of teaching is so important.
M. Kelly, how many students do you supervise?
K. Four.
M. It must be interesting to see everything through their eyes.
K. Last term, when I had the opportunity to be involved with them, I felt that I shared in their learning and reflections. But this term I'm more like the traditional practicum associate who comes in and writes things up. So it's really quite different. In this school, the co-operating teachers are not released from their classrooms to talk to me or to get together as a group. I feel like I'm

really imposing on them when I ask them to speak to me during recess or lunch breaks because they're very very busy and they do things like indoor supervision at lunch. Having been there (in the classroom) not so long ago myself, I remember what that feels like, how difficult it is to give up the odd moment you may have to yourself. They're a good group. I have no complaints with the teachers, but the structure is difficult to work in.

Transcripts: (pp. 132 -137)
A. I was thinking of a student teaching experience I had. It happened on the day my supervisor from the university was there to observe me. I was in a grade seven class. There had been a lot of misbehaviour throughout the class he'd observed and I was not able to control it. But instead of letting me talk about the experience, the supervisor asked me if I had seen one boy throw a chip bag at another boy. (laughter) As I sat through that conference, I thought I'd never be a teacher, that I'd never make it. I knew I'd had trouble before but to have someone else there to see it was horrible.
L. It could have been worse. Kelly, how do you respond when those things happen?
K. Well when things like that happen I usually chuckle and say I remember going through something like that as well.

*Anne's Reflection: This is the kind of response and safe space we need!*

D. Kelly, this story reminds me of being in good company. As a co-operating teacher, I've often found that my hardest job is helping the student teachers relax so they can enjoy this experience and can learn through it and from it.
A. Kelly, I also think responding to the student teacher in this way would be helpful and would create a middle space for learning. I think it's important to remember that what the university advisor sees on a short visit may not be reflective of the student's whole practicum.
D. It's too bad we tend to look at these "horrific" situations so negatively because these chaotic moments are often the ones we reflect on and learn from.
M. When I think about student teachers I have had, I know I can tell the difference between a student teacher who really is struggling and a student teacher who is having a bad lesson. We can all have those. You can be a wonderful teacher and have a great class but you can still have a day when things start to fall apart and when you wouldn't want anyone observing you!
K. I'm lucky because this term it's pretty much chuckling and saying, "Oh well, isn't that wonderful timing!" because I can see that these are not student teachers who are struggling. Whereas, last term I had two student teachers who were struggling. They didn't seem to have a teacher sense. But this term it's pretty much being able to say, well what did you learn from that experience and they take what they've learned and they move on. But even so, I know there still is that feeling, the apprehensiveness of wondering whether 'm going

to be marking that one down.
M. But that's because they aren't on the other side of the fence yet where they've had enough success in teaching that they can afford to absorb these horrific experiences. I think it's only in the last couple of years that I'm able to say oh that was a bad lesson or that was a bad day.
L. It does take a long time doesn't it? (It does) It does take years. (yes it does)

Reflective Turn: Britzman (1991), writes that "fear inscribed both the image and the relationship" (p. 198) of the student teachers with their supervisors. She said, "They anticipated chastisement for any error and expected the iteration of their own powerlessness" (p. 198).

Thinking about the stories that are told and lived in the student teaching experience, is to think about relations of power and knowledge. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995), suggest it is also to think about the sacred story of the theory practice split. If the student teaching experience is storied as the time when theory (which comes from the university) is put into practice in the school, it helps us understand why the student teacher regards the supervisor as the authority on theory, the judge of practice. If this theory is further seen as knowledge which is already established, there is no middle space for the student teacher to construct knowledge (to learn) in the practicum experience. While the cover story we tell about the practicum experience may be that it is a time for learning, the student teacher is at least intuitively aware that this is not the reality. For when university advisors and co-operating teachers try to deconstruct this story and try to tell a new story, the fact that they will in the end - even if they have not exercised this power at any other time during the practicum - have the power and the authority to pass or fail the student gets in the way of the retelling.

M. Your first inclination is always to think you did something wrong. To wonder, "What did I do wrong?" (mmmhmm). Sometimes there are things I've done, but now I can sort them out pretty quickly. There still are times however, when I'm halfway through a lesson and I'll think there's something not right but I persevere to the end anyway. Then I go home and think that was a waste of time. I should have just quit because they didn't learn anything, it was a struggle for me and it wasn't worth it for them. (mmmhmm) But I don't agonize over those lessons anymore and I know I can't always take the credit when things go right or the blame when things go wrong. Sometimes it's not even anything I can explain because I've had days when there were about four hundred interruptions - the intercom went off at least every fifteen minutes, a child threw up, another one had to go to the office and yet the lesson was brilliant. (mmmhmm) But even though I no longer agonize over those bad days, it's taken a long time for me to be able to separate the bad days from my identity as a teacher.

Research Journal: I wonder what relation the middle space has to the construction and acceptance of our teaching selves? If we see knowledge as socially constructed and the middle space as constructed by the participants in the school community, how do these participants and our relationships with these others define who we are, who we can become in this community? How does a lack of middle space divide us from our selves, from the other participants in our community, and limit our possibilities for becoming?

Because the possibilities for learning and becoming are storied and restoried within the communities we participate in, if we are able to construct a middle space in these communities where the private and public domains can be integrated, the possibilities for uniting the self and hence constructing a positive self identity would seem to be enhanced. Reflecting upon and talking about our relationships, our participation, the immediate and surrounding contexts (political, historical, cultural, gendered) we live in allows us to reframe, reinterpret and transform our selves and our communities.

Reflective Turn: In her book, *Practice Makes Practice*, Britzman (1991) explores the question of how "we construct not only our teaching practices and all the relationships this entails, but our teaching voices and identities" (p. 1) within the epistemological communities we are positioned in. Her ethnographic study of student teachers in secondary education posits that the context of student teaching is not neutral and that identity is not something teachers receive or assume. In this study she asks both "how our teaching selves are constituted in the context of learning to teach, and how the selves we produce constrain and open the possibilities to creative pedagogies" (p. 2).

Research Journal: As we have come to understand the middle space as constructed by teachers with their students, the question of how the teacher's continually evolving identity will either constrain or enhance the middle space she is able to construct with her students is an important one for us to consider. In our many conversations about how the middle space - or lack of middle space - in the school impacts on the teacher's ability to construct a middle space in her classroom, I think we have often focused more on external/systemic constraints than on the internal constraints posed by the teacher's own identity. However, as we see the middle space embedded in our relationships and in our respect for students, the teacher's identity - the identity the teacher is able to negotiate within the school and the society assumes a new importance. We can begin to make connections between the teacher and the quality of middle space that she will be able to construct. Situating the construction of the teacher's identity within the political, ideological, gendered context of the school and the society as well as within the classroom helps us further understand why we have come to believe that the middle space of the school impacts on the middle space of our classroom.

Reflective Turn: Further to this, if as Britzman (1991) suggests, we look at the ongoing construction of our teaching identities as encompassing both suppression and acceptance of aspects of the self, and we accept the self as a socially negotiated construct; we can see that "learning to teach is a social process of negotiation" . . . and that the construction of identity for the student teacher (and I would say for the teacher as well) involves "coming to terms with one's intentions and values, as well as one's views of knowing and being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiation, and dependency and struggle" (p. 8).

If we are to reframe and reclaim our teaching lives, this understanding helps us understand the possibilities of restorying the student teaching experience as a middle space, a space where the student teacher can construct and reconstruct an identity rather than the place where she will receive this identity or merely assume a teaching role.

K. For a student teacher, the student teaching experience can be a fairly tight space to be in if the teacher is judging you on whether you get something right the first time. I saw problems occur when a teacher was very rigid in her ideas about what she thought the student teacher should do in her classroom. The student teacher also had me coming into the school with a different idea of what student teaching should be like so she was trying to fit into two different models of student teaching. Even though I wanted her to have the space to make mistakes and figure things out for herself, I don't think she felt that she was in a safe space. I think she saw my attempts to make this experience more enjoyable and less threatening as just one more place where she had to figure out what someone else wanted so she could do the right thing.

D. When these rigid expectations surround the learning the student teacher is engaged in, you wonder what middle space there is for the students in that room. How does the teacher's philosophy of learning - in this case portrayed as transmission and acquisition of skills and knowledge - limit the possibilities of a middle space? If there is no room for difference, if the criterion for performance and practice are rigidly defined, how can the participants in that classroom construct a middle space?

M. And yet you might as well learn it in your student teaching experience because, let's face it, that's the kind of stuff you bump up against as a teacher all the time. You bump up against both rigid and conflicting expectations in administration, you bump up against it in parents (mmmhmm)

K. But I think this experience is different when you are a student teacher and you are being evaluated. When you're teaching it's your room, but for the student teacher who is coming in this is a very artificial situation.

D. So how can we imagine a middle space in relation to student teaching? What is artificial space? Is all school space artificial, not a real space in the middle where we construct our knowing but a system of transportation as Madeleine Grumet (1988) would say?

Anne's Reflection: *Sometimes it feels that way, but I think the space becomes artificial when there is no allowance made for the private domain, the inner space, of students/teachers lives in the public classroom, when it is not a space that is transformed by their participation.*

Reflective Turn: I think the artificiality which Anne and Kelly have spoken of, speaks to a place in which knowledge is seen as already existing, as something that only has to be passed on down the conduit, and therefore to a place where the knower is excluded from the experience of knowing and from the creation of knowledge. Drawing on the work of Dewey and Maxine Greene, Britzman (1991) explores "the structure of experience and the experience of structure in teacher education" (p. 28). She says "when knowledge is reduced to rigid directives that demand little else from the knower than acquiescence, both the knower and knowledge are repressed"

(p. 29).

If we want to reframe and restory teacher education, professional development and student learning in our schools, we will need to interrogate the artificial contexts that surround us and that fragment our knowing and our becoming, that seek to divide and repress rather than unite and transform, that exclude us as whole persons as they attempt to remake us as partial public beings.

M. Student teaching is also an artificial space because the student teachers are working with children who have been trained to work in that space.

K. Exactly, and what do you hear even at the grade six level, "Mrs. So and So doesn't do it that way." (laughter) So I think it is very artificial. But you know, it also depends on what we want to make the experience for the student teacher. Do we actually want to see the student teacher having real experiences, or do we have it scripted so tightly that this experience really isn't going to be that helpful later on except in learning how to play some game.

L. I think though, the sense of the classroom as a community of learners, depends on you as a co-operating teacher, on whether the children feel they are part of that community and on whether they will welcome the student teacher as part of that community.

M. I usually have two student teachers in my classroom at a time. In one situation, one student teacher was very much part of the community right away but the other one, who didn't like being in my class because she felt it was not rigid enough for her, was very uncomfortable and did not become part of our community. She was constantly saying things like: they're not disciplined, they're not organized, they're not structured. And it made me really laugh because they were extremely well structured, they just weren't completely quiet. I could leave the room and they would keep on writing, keep on conferencing, keep on doing everything they were supposed to be doing. But to her the very fact that a child would get up and go speak to someone on the other side of the room even if they were asking, could I borrow your dictionary, or could I read you my piece of writing, or could you conference with me, was unheard of.

D. So you're saying this student teacher wasn't comfortable because the children behaved in a way that was different from the script she had of what a classroom should be.

Anne's Reflection: *This is just one more story of how one's philosophy of learning determines middle space in the classroom.*

K. Think of all the tensions that can occur when the intentions are incompatible on the child's part, the teacher's part, the parent's part.

D. And then to include a student teacher within that already existing web of relationships, expectations, intentions and desires, increases the complexity even more.

Research Journal: Is the middle space bumping space? Or do we see it as a very insulated world in which we are protected from the outside elements?

*Anne's Reflection: No, I see it as open to outside elements, like the child's home life, the weather, current events, parents. But I also see it as needing protection if these outside elements threaten to destroy it.*

Transcripts: (pp. 182 - 187)
L. I have a student teacher in my room now. She's been in the school with another teacher for ten weeks but she wanted to spend some time with older students so she will be with me for two weeks.
K. And how's she fitting into the school? How's the school fitting her?
L. Well, actually very well which is why I think she's going to have a hard time with me. (laughter) Maybe she shouldn't come with me, I don't know.
D. Maybe she should.
L. Well she spent yesterday in my room and at the end of the day she said, "But what happens when you really want to teach them some content?"
K. Did you talk with her about that then Lisa?
L. Yes. Yesterday was rather an unusual day because I had ten kids away in the morning for choir and then we had gym for an hour in the afternoon. So it was different in that respect but even so, we didn't do anything much different than we would have if all the students had been there.
A. It does sound like she needs to be in your room.
L. Even though it's close to the end of the year, I'm still seeing them read books like crazy and still write like crazy which is really neat, but as far as listening to anybody standing up at the front of the room, I don't think it would work right now. (Overlapping conversation)
A. You mean because of the time of year, and that kind of thing?
L. Yes and well because we haven't done that for a long time. I hadn't really thought of that before she asked me but I said, "Well to be honest I don't do a lot of lecturing but if that's what you're planning you'll have to find out for yourself what that's like, how they are with that." I think she thought it was an off day and that when all the kids were present things would be different. But it won't be. Some really neat things were happening today. Because there weren't that many kids in the room, I could really catch more snippets of their conversation. I listened to a couple of kids who were reluctant writers when I came in January. They are writing a piece together. I was wondering if one might be taking over from the other but the way they were collaborating was amazing. I could have listened to their talk all day long. They were writing a story - based on the horror novels that they read - but they had made a map of

all of the characters, who fitted in where. Then they realized one couldn't fit in a particular place because they'd brought him in somewhere else so they were kind of moving the characters around. They had it on paper but they were moving it around. One of their characters was a murderer so they had to go look up which states had capital punishment because (laughter) they had to figure out which one had the death penalty. First they got an eighty-five encyclopedia but I said maybe things had changed since then so they got the ninety-three version and looked up all of the states. They were talking about how they felt about the death penalty and how things were changing in society because it looked as though in the years from eight-five to ninety-three more states had made laws allowing for capital punishment. They were talking about why that was happening and I was watching and thinking wow (laughter) this is writing? (laughter)

D. And what could you have possibly done up at the front of the room to equal that?

L. I don't know. But Jane said - after she asked what do I do when I really want to do some heavy content - it's kind of neat to see the kids doing things on their own and working independently. But she saw their ability to do this as influenced by their grade level because they were in grade six and she'd been working with grade three students until then. So I told her some of my grade one stories, that it wouldn't be any different if she walked into my grade one room. I really don't know what's going to happen, if she's going to miss the whole point of things, if she's better off to stay where she is.

D. Lisa, maybe even just a little image of you and your classroom in the back of her mind to think about someday in the future would be better than no image, no possibility for imaging another story.

A. It's interesting that that's the only kind of experience she has had so far.

L. And she's told me many times how comfortable she feels with the other teacher. She does a fair amount of talking in her room, less than some people but still a fair amount of "at the front kinds of things." And you know the students, that's how most of them live there so they sit through it, at least most of them do. But Jane has said how well she connected with this teacher and that they just couldn't have been matched better if a computer did it. So I thought then it's a good thing my name wasn't in the computer. (laughter)

D. It will be hard for her to begin to relate to a whole new class of students and such a different way of working with them in only two weeks. Don't student teachers move in gradually, a little bit at a time?

K. Not at the school I'm practicum consultant at. No. They move right from one division to the next and begin teaching the first day. That's what I've been seeing. I don't agree with it, but that's what I've been seeing. (that's hard) It's very hard. As an advisor, I had enough difficulty adjusting to the fact that I was now seeing this person in a different grade. Student teachers are aware of how they do have to try to get along. It is part of playing the game. One of my student teachers who was absolutely wonderful moved from division two to division one this week. I was expecting to hear the kind of reports I had heard from her last co-operating teacher but the first thing her new co-operating teacher said to me was, "She has to learn to keep the class quiet. They're really out of line with her." And I looked around and though what, I don't get it. So when I talked to the student teacher after I said, "So things are a little different here?" And she said, "Yes, it's very much knowing what the rules are in this room and trying to become part of the rules when I'm here because my style is something that she doesn't appreciate and will not even consider."

*Anne's Reflection: It's so important to help student teachers become aware of alternatives to the traditional teacher. Jane is fortunate to have this opportunity, Lisa. I didn't and my first year of teaching was quite traditional and uninspired. I was lucky to become inspired in my second year, by a great group of teachers in Wollaston Lake. As it is, in most cases, the student teaching experience just reproduces the traditional view of knowledge and of teaching.*

L. But in wanting her to think more about what teaching is, will she feel like I'm not appreciating her way of being.
K. It sounds like you're open to me Lisa.
L. What if Jane wants to stand up at the front and talk all day?
A. You'll probably let her try. Right?
L. I know, I know. . . (laughter) Is that very fair to her?

## PART IV.

## RECONNECTING OUR PERSONAL AND PUBLIC VOICES

> Much of what I say here is critical, for I position myself in opposition to much of what is becoming institutionalized as official policy in this society. The program of criticism and renewal I avow interprets education relationally, as having intimate connections both to the structures of inequalities in this society and to attempts to overcome them. (Apple, 1993, p. 3)

> The culture and polity in which we live, and the educational institutions that contribute to and critique them, will not change just because some of us change our minds. But it is also true that unless we change our minds as well as our actions and our institutions, no lasting transformation will be possible (Minnich, 1990, p. 2).

### .... It's risky if you want to change

Transcripts: (pp. 217 - 219)
K. It can be so risky if you want to change. Over Christmas it was interesting for me to hear a parent's perspective. She was bashing teachers. I just sat back because it is so difficult to argue against this type of thinking but at one point I said, "Well what if they do want to change?" Because there are teachers I think who do want to change, but if you admit that you want to change and you don't have the support it's pretty difficult. I've been in that position myself, where I wanted to do something that was different from what was happening in the school, and it is a very uncomfortable space to be in.

Research Journal: Middle space as we have come to understand it in our conversations and stories is not just infinite space, it is space embedded in a structure of support. That structure is built out of respect and caring for both the students and the teachers and without it it is difficult to to risk, to change, to imagine new possibilities.

L. I'm thinking of a woman who left our school. She was a leader in the beginning of the whole language movement. She came to our school three years ago but was driven out because within this school the things she did with her students were perceived as too noisy, out of hand and chaotic, but worst of all she was seen as one of "them." (laughter) Later another teacher left because she was "one of them", and now I'm "one of them". But there are people in our school who need their jobs, who don't want to leave. Because of the story of conformity they see being lived out in our school, with its implicit message of conform or get out, they think, "If I do want to talk about curriculum, evaluation and assessment differently, maybe I'll become one of them and I'll be driven out too". In this school, any teacher who takes risks, who see things differently, who makes changes has been labelled "one of them." Donna said to me the other day that all the attention placed on spelling and grammar in this school was getting in the way of writing and reading in her classroom. She's going to take Atwell's book home, but I think I've probably done an incredible disservice in giving it to her to read because it's going to make her even more dissatisfied, more anxious to change her teaching practice. But she can't. She could, I guess, if she was ready to take the risk but I don't think she will be ready to do that until she has a couple of other teachers to connect with, to support her, to give her the space which the structure and the administration in this school do not provide.

Research Journal: Looking at this teacher's desire to change as it is embedded within the political context of the school can help us understand the dilemmas she will experience if she decides to do something that is not written into the script for this school. Becoming "one of those" teachers who challenge either implicit or explicit expectations has both day to day and long term consequences. As I think about this, I wonder how the individual teacher will create a middle space for the children in her room if there is no middle space, no structure of support for her in the school?

*Anne's Reflection: It would be tough, I'd say, to do so. Depending on how strong the restrictions are in her school, it may be possible but working against the grain is really tough.*

L. I know there are teachers in our school who are thinking of how things could be different. I have the freedom to challenge the system in that school and to make changes because I'm only there until the end of June but they can't, not where they are now, not without it being a really uncomfortable, unpleasant kind of thing.
D. I know I sometimes did things that were outside the boundaries of what would have been seen as acceptable practice in our school. Years ago, before it was "the thing to do", I decided I needed more physical space for my students to do partner reading so I started to use some of the space outside my classroom door. I had students sitting in pairs along the hallway as well as in the boot rooms at both ends of the hallway. This meant I had to do a lot of walking back and forth to ensure we weren't disturbing anyone but I know this practice was not looked upon very favourably. Not then. Not only was I using school time - defined in this context as teacher instructional time - to let the students read real books by themselves, but I was using more than my allotted space. It didn't matter that this was empty space or that allowing the students to spread out so they could listen to each other read and discuss the books was a good pedagogical decision. Doing this put me in a position where I received some very questioning looks. And although I was never openly challenged or told to stop this practice, I was made aware (often by other teachers as well as administration) that I was doing something that was perceived as outside the boundaries of "the normal".
A. Yes, I wouldn't have gotten away with that.

Research Journal: As I type these transcripts, I'm thinking that I also know teachers in our school who wouldn't have risked doing this, and others who wouldn't have gotten away with it if they had. School rules, spoken or otherwise, are not always applied fairly or consistently. I do believe I was in a position where I could break some unspoken rules easier than some other teachers. I often got the feeling that I was being given a wide circle but I wouldn't describe it as middle space. I never really knew how far I could "push my luck" or "push back the boundaries."

Transcripts: (p. 291)
L. I was just thinking again as I was reading and responding to some of the earlier transcripts how important it is to be in a supportive group. I started reading and I only got to about the fifth page. It took me an hour and a half to read and reflect on that section because there was so much to say in response to our conversation. It made me think how important it is to have these transcripts to look back on again. This group keeps grounding me when I think I'm losing my mind, when I'm not fitting in, when I'm doing things I hate. As I relive our conversations through the transcripts, or when I come here to meet with the group, I think oh, this is pulling me back to what I believe in and why I believe it. My experience reminds me of a hot air balloon tied to a rope. I feel like I'm drifting farther and farther away from myself but when I read this or when I come here someone, some story, pulls me back into myself again.
D. It sure helps you understand how teachers who don't have any person to talk to in their school will eventually burn out or give up and follow the path of least resistance.

### .... Teaching is a moral act: Conflicting voices

Transcripts: (pp. 137 - 147)
K. Sometimes in our schools, we need to respond to families in the community who challenge the curriculum, for whatever reasons.
M. I just finished reading a book by David Booth about censorship in the schools which talks about this dilemma.
K. Is it a good book?
M. Yes. It really made me think. It's his response to the backlash against the *Impressions* Reading Series. When you read the book you realize how powerful the public voice can be. It's scary though, because the public voice might not be the voice of the majority but when "the public" is perceived to be demanding something it becomes a powerful force in determining what the politically minded school board will do. This particular series was pulled from the classrooms in several districts and there was actual physical violence over the use of these books.
K. Oh, I believe it.
A. I was never so surprised as when that happened. We had just ordered this reading series in the northern Saskatchewan school I was in and the teachers thought it was a wonderful. Then all of the sudden we started to hear about the trouble in Alberta.

D. It doesn't even take a very big group of parents to put something like this in motion.
K. The same sort of thing can happen in a school too. When I think of the Ninja Turtle books being pulled off the shelves in our school because one teacher objected to them and equated the reading of these books with the violence that was occurring at recess time, I am furious.
M. She thought the fighting was because of the Ninja Turtle Books?
K. There had been an increase in play fighting outside and she said it was because of the books. I had some students in grade two who were hardly reading anything else. I would have liked them to read more widely, but I was happy that these books had them interested in reading. But there was no discussion on this issue, no chance for me to tell my story. Without warning, and on the basis of what one teacher said, the Ninja Turtle books were pulled. Pull the books. That's it. They're gone.
L. Did you say, give them to me? (laughter)
K. No. Not only did he pull the books from the school library, he demanded that I take them out of my classroom library as well. I was really angry about that. But there was no discussion, that's just the way it was.
L. So what did the kids say?
K. Well, they were really upset because they couldn't understand why they couldn't read these books anymore. In our classroom discussion, one of the boys raised a really interesting issue. He asked does that mean that now the WWF wrestling books have to go too? These wrestling books were in the book fair (laughter) and they were considered perfectly acceptable. I thought, yes exactly, where does the censorship stop? And what does this say to the children in my room who watch wrestling in their homes. While it is not something I personally think is wonderful culture, who am I to say if it is part of their lifestyle that it should be disallowed. I think this whole issue leads us to talk about how we are opening spaces or closing middle space down by imposing our values on the culture that we will allow to come into the classroom. The wrestling is part of their culture and I don't have any problem with that. The Ninja Turtle books are part of their lives too.
L. I don't think my kids would be quiet if something like that happened. But they're in grade six and already politically aware and quite vocal. They are trying to determine what their rights are. Responding to the experience and the issue of censorship would turn into a great learning experience for them.
K. What do you do as a teacher though, where do you stand?
L. Oh I'd probably give them the paper (laughter) and maybe tell them where they could mail their letters (laughter). But then again how much can you feel comfortable in encouraging or discussing without really getting yourself into some hot water. I don't know if I'd feel very comfortable encouraging them to challenge a directive from the principal.
K. It also makes it difficult to know what to do when these directives are filtered down with no reasons given as to why certain decisions have been made. Take the Gulf War for instance, I don't know what happened at your school but

we were certainly told that under no circumstances were we to discuss the Gulf war with our students.
A. What, just because it would upset them?
M. Did you have a lot of children from that part of the world in your school?
K. Maybe a couple but I'm not really sure where this directive came from or why it was issued. I guess it might have filtered down from the top but we were told by our fearless leader that under no circumstances should we discuss the Gulf War. I ended up discussing it anyway because I had children in my room who were terrified. They came into the school after they had heard things at home, after they had watched it on television. What do you do? Do you say, I'm sorry we can't discuss that here. Turn to page sixty-seven now in your social studies text book. (laughter) You're in school now. Close off the world out there. You're feeling really upset. You're all fearful, but we'll just get on with the curriculum. (laughter)
L. Yes, class. Let's sing if you're happy and you know it... (laughter).
M. Or, can you save that till sharing time (hysterics)
L. Oh yes dear, hold that tortured thought.
M. That's right. We'll just put that alongside of the Ninja Turtles that have been banned. (laughter)
A. There's a lot of control from the top. Do you think they ever think about how their orders will fit into life in a classroom?
M. We weren't told not to discuss it, but we were told to be sensitive to children in our classes from Iran and Iraq.
D. I can see the need for sensitivity but it's interesting that the directive is for the classroom teacher to be sensitive when we are the ones who are usually the ones who are trying to protect our students from the insensitivity of those outside the system.
L. Directives from outside the classroom (even at the school level) can make teaching and relating to students in the class so hard but you come up against them all the time. It becomes a question of how much you are willing to push over that line for the good of children and for your own good. This is getting back to your story last week. Teaching is a moral act. I'll tell you a story about what happened at my school.

*When I first got to my school this term, the principal came in and said that he wasn't allowing children to wear the BUM tee shirts. Then he singled out a particular student in my class who wore these tee shirts. I knew that the principal and the student had not seen eye to eye for years (laughter). There was a history of an unhealthy relationship between them. Anyway, the principal particularly said, "Tom is not supposed to wear that shirt. You tell him not to, because he knows that students are not allowed to wear the BUM shirt in this school."*

K. But he wants you to tell him?

L *Yes as he said, "Because he knows. He's already been told by me and so I'm just making you aware of this." I thought this was kind of strange because sitting right beside him was another fellow wearing a BUM tee shirt too. It's almost like wearing NIKE now. But the principal had decided that it presented a bad image. I'd seen these shirts all over the place and I'd never looked at them that way before, but I decided since I was new to the school I'd better be careful. So I spoke to Tom's friend Ryan, who was also wearing his tee shirt that day because I thought if this rule applies to Tom I guess it applies to everybody. I pulled Ryan aside and said, "Has anybody ever talked to you about your tee shirt?" - I thought maybe it was a school directive and I was the only one who hadn't heard about it. - "Has anyone ever said that it's an offensive kind of thing to wear and that you shouldn't be wearing it?" And Ryan looked at me like I was crazy. "What do you mean? I got this for Christmas from my grandma. No, no one's ever talked to me about that." (laughter) So I just left it. I thought I'm just going to leave this. I'm not going to deal with it. I'm not going to tell them to wear or not wear these tee shirts. I'm just going to hope it goes away. (laughter)*

*But day after day the students showed up in these BUM shirts. I started doing an informal survey and found at least ten kids everyday wearing a BUM shirt. There was even a school assembly with kids on stage (hysterics) and three of them had BUM shirts on. (laughter) I wondered what was going on and worried that the principal was going to call me on it again and tell me to tell Tom not to wear his shirt. If he had come to me, I was ready to tell him that if he did not want these tee shirts in the school he had better make it a school wide directive because about one-third of the students were wearing BUM tee shirts. Their parents had probably spent about thirty or forty dollars on each one so I figured there would be a real uproar. For about three days I worried about this (nervous laughter) and thought he was going to come in!*

*Those kind of things require you to take a moral position and you come up against them all the time. Another example is wearing caps in school, when the kids are pushing one way and administration is pushing another way, and parents are pushing another way, and as the teacher you're looking for a way of finding some comfortable space.*

Research Journal: It seems like this conflict is as much about who has power and who has no power in this school as it is about which tee shirts are acceptable. Tom had no power, and Lisa felt she had no power until she decided to resist the order the principal gave to her. Neither did they have any democratic rights. Both Tom and Lisa could be told what to do, and had no voice in making decisions about how they should act or what they should do. The principal had power and was using it to control others. But he must have decided that the large group of students wearing BUM shirts who were backed by parents who had bought these shirts had power too, because he did not challenge them on breaking this "school rule."

When Lisa decided she would not follow the principal's command to tell Tom to quit wearing his shirt because he was not being treated fairly, this became an ethical issue for her. In the days following her decision not to single Tom out for unfair treatment, she experienced a lot of tension. As I come to think about middle space as a political space - which I think it must be because of the struggle that frames its very existence - I worry about the increased tension and ethical dilemmas teachers will encounter as they choose to construct school as a middle space, as they try to tell new stories in a place which many think of as apolitical.

## .... Stuck in the middle

*Anne's Reflection: Middle space is indeed political space. I guess we all need to learn to play the game to some extent, to get what we want -- the freedom to construct a middle space with our students.*

D. As teachers, our middle space in the school gets constricted pretty quickly doesn't it?
L. It does, and I'm thinking why did I spend two days totally concerned about the most unimportant thing that could possibly go on in this classroom. Why is that taking up one second of my time and energy? Why should it? It's just so absurd. I mean if the principal came in and said we're really worried about Tom because he can't read, then I'd say, okay, fair enough. He's twelve. I guess we should probably look into this a little more. But these other kinds of things take up so much energy that could be better spent on creating a constructive learning community.
A. And they do in the whole running of the school. Your BUM shirt story reminds me of the fuss over the Simpsons' tee shirts in our division. Kids weren't supposed to wear them because the Simpson family promoted bad family values.
L. We seem to be trying to hang onto remnants and ideas from the past like not wearing hats in the public building, but for so many of my boys in particular these hats are their uniform. They spend a lot of money and a lot of time choosing them and they represent their interests. They're nice but for some reason we want to hang onto what we think family values are. It's back to the basics kind of talk. If we hang onto these rules and remnants maybe all our

modern problems will go away.

Research Journal: This really makes me think about how our schools are structured to preserve the dominant cultural values and how this structure works to silence individual criticisms and concerns. Because it's the way things are, so often we don't even stop to ask why they are that way, whose interests this "normal way of doing things" serves? I think we need to ask how middle space can make a place for those children who may come to school with very different values and beliefs from those which are unquestioningly accepted as normal.

L. I'm finding it really interesting to hear how vocal the students in my class are becoming. I don't know if they were always like this or if it's the nature of being eleven and twelve but they are really aware of rules and are always questioning the unquestioned. "Why can't I? Give me a good reason. I haven't yet heard any reason as to why I should or shouldn't do what this school is asking me to do." And so I try and dance around these issues. Saying, "Well if you wear a cap I can't see your beautiful face (laughter) just doesn't cut it with grade six students. And saying it's a school rule for sure doesn't cut it. It's just a rule. They just don't buy it all, they just won't accept that as a sufficient answer. They're starting to talk quite openly about these issues and to push those rules. It's so hard for me to know where to be in their discussions.
D. Because on one hand you want to cheer them on - like the animals in *Charlotte's Web* who cheered on Wilbur's attempt to escape from his pen - but on the other hand, you realize they may be making trouble for themselves - so like the other animals you feel responsible to encourage them to come back into the pen, to accept their captivity to these rules as an inevitable and eventually "normal" part of life.
L. Well I don't encourage them to do whatever they want to do. That's for sure. What I did do, was put pins along the wall for them to hang their hats on. Now they've got their own hook to hang their hat on, kind of like a bar I guess (laughter) and they seem to be really comfortable with that. They have their own hooks - and don't you dare hang your hat on my hook. That seemed to be a way to dance around that problem. We still haven't addressed the issue underlying this directive. All I did was get them to take their caps off (laughter) in a way which acknowledged my understanding of the importance of their hats.
K. But Lisa, I wonder how do you as a teacher live with that if your values are such that you really do believe that children have the right to express themselves freely?
D. Is the right to express yourself freely something we see as important to the construction of middle space?

*Anne's Reflection: I think it is as long as it is not interfering with someone else's rights.*

M. We spent at least an hour in a staff meeting once discussing caps. It was ridiculous. Some people are bitterly opposed to having them worn in the school and other people don't care. We couldn't come up with a concrete reason as to why not so it was left to each teacher to decide. But in the hall, hats had to come off.
K. That would cause a lot of tension.
M. It did because there was a girl in grade six who would wear wonderful hats that were very creative and suit what she was wearing.
A. You mean the girls weren't supposed to wear hats either?
M. No. We had to standardize it.
D. But how do we reconcile the inclusion of differences in the middle space and standardization?

*Anne's Reflection: Standardization is for sure one of those words I love to hate.*

L. As a teacher, I feel I'm stuck in the middle, in a middle space that is not very comfortable. I'm stuck in the middle of trying to work within this staff and this administration and what they believe is important or unimportant and still valuing what and who the kids want to be. But I guess ultimately I think, "I'm the person who is with these students all day long. If you were with these kids all day long and you felt comfortable asking them to take their caps off then you would, but until you are in that space, you, as an administrator, should not be making decisions about how we will live together without consulting us! We're the ones who need to work together in this space and your decisions and rules affect the quality of trust and the relationships that we can form."

*Anne's Reflection: Respect of others, be they principals or students or teachers, has to form the basis of our relationships and our rules.*

### .... Interrogating "normal": Sacred space in a public place

K. I think it's refreshing that at least the students are thinking. Maybe if in our schools we could provide students with the space to critically question the normal state of affairs, we could perhaps move away from some of the atrocities that we as unthinking humans have committed. I was just watching a newscast which showed a whole village which was annihilated by an army. No one in that army thought beyond the fact that they were given orders. They were given orders to shoot children and women. Seven hundred people were massacred. It may seem like a big leap, but I think if we as teachers started to question some of the things we were told to do and some of the things that we do to each other in schools and helped children to do the same, we could help them to develop a social conscience. Wearing a cap may seem like a very small issue but I've been on more than one school staff where no one questioned the basic premises of policies that were detrimental to both students and teachers. It was like there were whole areas/subjects that were just not to be questioned.

D. Once again though I wonder, if we as teachers do not have this type of space how do we create it for our students? I think as teachers, we have to accept that the space for this questioning will in many cases not be given to us, and recognize that if we want it, we will have to work together to construct it on terrain which is not going to easily be given up.

Transcripts: (pp. 155 - 161)

M. I find Christopher exhausting. He's the boy who wants to commit suicide, who I told you about before. He made that threat to me last week which he's never done before. It's always been to his parents. He was really mad.

L. Does he say it if you won't do what he wants?

M. No. He just said I want to kill myself and I mean it.

D. Oh, that is scary.

M. Yes. I know and sad, very sad.

A. What did you do?

M. I said you must be feeling really bad. That's what I'm supposed to say. We've had a psychologist do some work with him and they're trying to get him into a program but unless the child has actually attempted suicide it's really hard.

D. I didn't even know grade ones could think that way.

M. Well he's already had it planned out. It's jump in the river or jump in front of a bus.

A. He sounds like a pretty exceptional six year old though.

L. Do you worry where he'll be next year?

M. Oh, yes. It's only because of him that I would consider going into grade two next year. I could take him with me to grade two but I don't know if I can do it. I know I sound melodramatic when I say that but it's hard. Some days I go home and think I have to be restored myself. I have to do a lot of counselling with him because there's nowhere else he's going to get it from but I'm not really trained for it and I don't know what to do but I have to do it anyway because I'm the only one he's talking to. His parents are doing the best they can but they're really limited even thought they're educated and they're caring. But they're so demanding. They have such high expectations of him and he can't possibly meet them. And they don't see that.

A. It's hard to be objective about what you're doing as a parent.

M. I can talk to Christopher and I can do things with Christopher but ultimately I'm not responsible for him in his life. I'm responsible for certain parts of it right now but parents are always looking at past, present and future. They don't see

a child just in the present but look at their past and their future simultaneously. But they've lied to him. They've lied to him so many times. Just recently he said to me but you always tell the truth. And I said how do you know that and he said because you told me you didn't like that piece of writing. And I said yes, I won't lie to you. But you see his parents do. They lied about why they separated. They lie about all these things. They said it was exciting to be divorced because you live in two houses. Well none of my class thought that was exciting. When he came and brought that for sharing, oh guess what I live in two houses they went aah, his parents are separated. He said well that's okay I live in two houses. My class said, "Aah," because they've been through the pain whereas his parents just said think how exciting it will be. You'll live in two houses. You'll have two beds. You'll have two of this and that, but they didn't tell him the other part - that it's sad. I don't know if you bleed, but sometimes I bleed over them and it's not healthy for me.
K. It wouldn't be healthy not to at the same time.
M. You think it wouldn't?
K. Well I'm just throwing that out. I think part of me says that if I could go in and come out it would be easier for me. But I'm trying to think of what that would look like in my classroom. I think I've actually had teachers like that, teachers who stayed at a safe distance from their students.
M. I've wondered about that too because some people I've worked with say you have to leave it behind and I try to but there's always a part of me that's thinking about it.
K. I don't think a person can really deny who they are. Teaching is just a part of who you are. I tend to be a certain way and that's going to show in my teaching. I can look at what might be healthy and try to incorporate some of those strategies but I think if I try to be the way I'm not then that would make me worse.
L. I can't leave things at school. I don't leave one self and become another as I leave and enter places. When I phone Greg at night - and that's what I miss most about him being away - he sits and watches T.V. on the other end of the line and I tell him the stories of my day, the good stories and the bad stories. I can't just leave these stories in the school.
M. I drive to school with a really good friend of mine and we tell our stories on the way home. I need a time and a space where I can reflect on the experiences of my day.

Research Journal: Let's think about what these stories might be saying about the kinds of spaces that teachers experience as middle spaces, places where they connect their private and professional lives. Also how does the telling of these stories help us think about a collaborative storytelling group such as ours? How beneficial is this group to you and would it be something you would see as beneficial within the context of the school? Is it necessary that our middle space be confined to the school? We've looked a lot at making room for the private self in the public world of school, but do we also need to think about how we bring the world of school outside, both private and public, into the spaces we live in outside the school?

M. But that's not what I meant about bleeding exactly.
L. I know what you meant about bleeding. Your heart hurts. Your heart aches. It aches for them.
M. It's those times when you know that there is nothing that you can do and you can not change it. You can teach them to read. You can teach them to make themselves breakfast but how meaningful is that when their worlds are in chaos.
K. Those are the places where the moral issues come in, the spiritual and moral part of life which I can't separate from my teaching.
D. And which can't be separated from our work to construct a middle space. I think in my teaching, it was the ethical issues and the moral dilemmas that intensified my need for a middle space - a space within the public / political realm where my private being could be not only acknowledged but also welcomed and supported.
M. I guess maybe that's why I keep asking you about this. I've always been taught you have to do this. You must be able to do this. Not separating your private self from your teaching self is a deficiency. Not separating your private and public self will make you an ineffective teacher because you can't live a balanced life if you "bring your work home" and I would guess if you bring your home to work. It's not true but that's what people said when I took a leave for three months. People all said it was because I couldn't leave my work at school. That wasn't what the problem was, but that's what the reaction was.
K. I think there are always going to be people like that. A teacher I used to teach with would say things like: You have to prepare them for the real world. It's tough out there. You can't get so involved. You have to set boundaries.
M. You think about yourself in your life, the world is out there and you're bumping into it soon enough. But you need to be able to look back and say, yes that person did love me, that person cared for me. There was a girl that I had last year. She had an identical twin sister. I loved her and she loved me and we had a really good relationship. And for her it made a difference. I see her this year and it has made a difference. She finds me every time I am on supervision and we always catch up on the news. She tells me about her report card. I know we have a really good relationship and I know it has made a difference to her to know that in her world I love her. She's saying, "I can't be all bad no matter what anybody says to me. I know it's not true because somebody does love me."
L. Does Christopher feel that way too, do you think?
M. He might by the end of the year. I don't know. At the moment it's enough

that he knows that I'm honest with him.

L. Which to him would be love?

M. It might be because he doesn't believe it when people say I love you because they lie about other things.

L. You live that every day with him.

D. You know they (whoever they is) say the same thing to nurses. My sister is a nurse. She's supposed to leave everything at work too but she doesn't. She comes home and tells the stories to her husband and when I'm there she tells them to me. The last time I was at her place she had a patient who was expected to die during the night, an older woman. It affected our visit. We were out in the hot tub trying to talk about other things but I could tell that a piece of her was not in the hot tub talking to me. She was back in the hospital wondering what she would find when she went in on her next shift. She doesn't view nursing as any less personalized than I view teaching.

K. But you know I guess I worry about and wonder about what teaching and nursing would look like if they were depersonalized, if we left ourselves behind when we went to work. Because I guess I'm thinking about people who do that, who don't allow themselves to feel another human being's hurt. I can't help thinking that if you can not hear someone else's hurt you can't hear their laughter either. It's all just part of it.

L. I think there was a point for me - when I came home with my stories and cried every night and in the morning - that Greg and I started to talk about the possibility that I should be taking a break from teaching. When the stories were hurting me on an ongoing basis, where I was feeling for too long - not too much - but where it wasn't letting up, I wondered if I needed to step outside the stories.

D. I think we can become depleted through our caring. We talked about Marg's continuing on, but who is continuing for her? Who is caring for her? I don't think this justifies not caring, or provides a rationale for separating the private from the professional, but I do think these stories speak to our need as teachers to have a place of support and care for ourselves as well as our students in schools.

*Anne's Reflection:* *Yes, the middle space doesn't (shouldn't) stop at the classroom door. We need support, love, groups such as this one, family, friends. I create a middle space at home too but there it is not seen as unusual whereas in the school it is. I guess though, at least in the past, many men have not tended to "bring their office stories home."*

(The collaborative storytellers in this group have become burdened down with our emotionally challenging conversation and have sought a short reprieve in the middle space they generate in small talk about Anne's chair, Thomas, Nicolas and new babies, picture books, books suitable for the age and reading level of the child, animal books where the animal always dies,writing research proposals, further education and Debbie's driving story.)

D. I think our acceptance of this unnatural splitting of home and school has not only resulted in a feeling of disconnection in our own and our students lives but that it has resulted in parents who feel they are unwelcome at school. It has also made a lot of them think what happens in the school is of more consequence and worth than what happens in the home. In too many cases, this attitude has cut students off from the caring, loving connections they need if they are to be successful in school and in life. Stories from my teaching life, from my children's lives and from what I was seeing in the lives of my grade one students prompted me to write their parents an invitation to enter my classroom and their children's lives. I wrote the story of this disconnection and the invitation to reconnect as a poem.

### .... Important stuff

So, what is the age you would pick to say
that a child is old enough
To stop giving tender loving care and get
on with important stuff?

Is it two, four, six, eight, or more till he
won't need you right by his side
To soothe his hurts or to smooth his path,
I guess it's for you to decide.

Just when is the time he'll not need your care
as he faces each challenging day
And when is the time that you won't be there
cause your presence just gets in the way?

Have you ever watched a baby at play as he
ventured away from his mom
And laughed as you heard the patter he made
when he suddenly wanted to come

Back to his mother to touch the home base
Back to his mother to look at her face
Back to his mother's warm embrace
Back to his mother, just in case....

She wouldn't be there when he came around
Or he looked for her but she couldn't be found
And he'd be alone on the kitchen floor
Waiting for her to appear once more?

Or when have you watched a toddler so smug
Go off and then return for the hug
He needed before he could safely explore
The world outside of the kitchen door?

Or the four-year-old walking down the street
Who is looking back like he might retreat
But who keeps on going each time you wave
As he tries so hard to be big and brave?

Just when is the time you'd think it was best
To push these young children out of the nest
To fly on their own and to meet the test
That will judge how they compare with the rest?

Of the children who come to school each year
Who try to hide that embarrassing tear,
Is the six-year-old man up to this task,
Can he hide his feelings behind a mask?

He wanted you there in the room awhile
He needed to see the love in your smile
He just had to know he could count on you
To watch and make sure he knew what to do.

If he thought you'd stay till he let you go
He wouldn't have had to hang on to you, so
Why did you leave him before you knew
He was ready to see the whole day through?

Or who can still see that eight-year-old's grin
(As you cheer from the sidelines for him to win)
Fade as he's playing and tension mounts
Until you tell him its trying that counts?

And you teach him about doing his best
'Cause in this world that's the ultimate test,
But he needs to hear if from you each day
When there's so much else that gets in the way

Of his feelings of worth and self-esteem,
Since playing your best doesn't always seem
To be what you do to get on that team
Where scoring and winning are all they dream.

Or the cool dude who's now in junior high
Who most needs your love but who'd rather die
Than have you show up in that scary place
With an ignorant grin upon your face?

He acts like a hoodlum from outer space
But he thinks that you're the source of disgrace
As he seems so tough and runs with a crowd
That can't say they need to be loved out loud.

But who begs for it through a silent plea
That says please mother, don't give up on me
I know I'm too big to sit on your knee
But I'm really alone and need company.

Or the nineteen-year-old out on his own
Whose link with you is the telephone
Is he old enough now to make it alone?
You'd think so, if you could ignore the tone

As he checks to see if you're missing him
And asks if you'll co-sign his latest whim
Sounding kind of surprised that you weren't in
When he'd called twice before to find where you'd been.

So, don't think for a moment your job is done
When you send the school your six-year-old son.
There's no way we can give him all he'll need
To have faith in himself and to succeed.

He's yours, and he needs you close by his side
To listen and hear what he will confide,
To take his hand when the going gets rough
Until he is grown and is old enough...
To get on with important stuff.
(Schroeder, 1989b)

A. My mother has thirty year old children that I'm sure she could still add to that poem. (laughter)

### .... Seeing our selves in the middle space

Transcripts: (pp. 314 - 316)
L. You know, it has just recently dawned on me that who I am and what I do in

the classroom is not separate from who I am, or how I am, when I'm not there. Like my desk is a mess. It's got stuff on it everywhere. I go into other people's classrooms who are like my colleague. He has a day book on his desk and that's it. Nothing - not a thing, not a thing. And his desk is at an exact ninety degree angle to the board. He's got everything lined up - I'm sure he measures the tops of his binders to make sure they are all the same height. That's how methodically thought through his room is. The kids even pile the text books like this (shows us). When my kids put the textbooks or whatever it is that they're using back on the shelf they're kind of scattered. And that's sort of how my room looks. But then I go home to our house and that's how our house is and that's how our life is. Greg and I always live in chaos because we never know from one minute to the next where we're going to be living. So the spaces we create are not separate from us. The spaces are what we are, who we are.

A. Well Debbie, you've made quite a few comments about the private and the public being together, not really separable and that sort of ties into what Lisa is saying. We can't separate our private selves from our teaching identities and we can't expect students to separate their private lives and leave them at the door either.

L. And how often they come up against that expectation, how often we forget these students have a personal identity, a personal story to tell. They have as much right to expect that the space of school will reflect their personalities as I have to expect that it will reflect mine. A couple of weeks ago we talked about how kids are different with different people. I wonder how different we are with different kids, or if we expect them to be just like us, or just like the standardized kid who is seen as normal.

L. Exactly. I wonder though if when Gordon is evaluated and when I'm evaluated, if he's looked at as being a better teacher because he is teaching to the "normal" student in a neat, linear, classroom which does not have to make space for and encompass the chaos and the multiplicity that mine does?

D. It depends on who's doing the evaluating, right?

L. But I wonder if the majority of people still doing the evaluating would view that as the way things should be done.

Transcripts: (pp. 334 - 335)

M. We were interviewing teachers yesterday for a special needs position. I was asked to be part of the interviewing process. It was neat. It was amazing. You sit there with three people interviewing. You're all interviewing the same person. You're all hearing the same information. But your perceptions are not necessarily the same. One person we interviewed had formal special needs training. After the interview the administrator and assistant administrator both said she was far too clinical. Neither of them had worked in special needs. So I said, no this is her special needs background. She's letting you know that she knows all of the assessment tools that you might want her to use. That's what she was trained to do. I know because I was trained in special needs as well. I had to interpret her responses for them and I thought if I hadn't been here it wouldn't be a very informed decision.

Research Journal: If we are looking at knowledge as socially constructed, which is the epistemological foundation of this study, this conversation seems to be an example of the richness our understanding can achieve as we listen to a multiplicity of voices, as we include more people and perspectives in the construction of knowledge. I think it is also an example of how our understanding is never complete or "true", and shows that we can never know reality as it "really is" - there could always be another voice to further inform our understanding, there could always be another way to tell this same story. Extending this understanding into our discussion of middle space also seems very appropriate if we think of the private and personal meanings/ perceptions/ stories, each person brings to school to contribute to the public conversation and how this public conversation further alters or enriches the personal stories we each live.

## .... Subversive pockets of hope

Transcripts: (pp. 343 - 344)

L. My principal is at a conference right now called Outcomes Based Education.

M. That's the political climate schools are embedded in right now.

K. Yes. Times are lean. Let's produce. Let's produce marks and marketable students. (group sighs and mutters)

L. But I think and I hope that the space you have called middle space will continue to find a place, that there will be pockets of teachers who will hang onto some of the good things that have been growing in the cracks during the last few years.

D. That's what O.[10] said off the record. She said that's what I'm hoping. I'm hoping that teachers in classrooms will keep on doing what is best for children even under circumstances that are going to make that very difficult. It's interesting how as our conversation comes to one ending that we are left with an image of middle space as a subversive pocket of hope on an educational landscape which can be quite bleak and uninviting.

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[10] O. has worked for the Department of Education in the Province of Alberta and has seen a movement away from programs and policies which place the child and teacher at the centre of curriculum to those which see school as directly answerable to business and to the marketplace.

Lisa's Reflection: *But I'll always ask questions leading to new questions. It's when I can engage in a conversation about these questions that I love my teaching and my life. It's so much healthier to live above ground.*

> Research Proposal: And it is this broadening and heightening of struggles that I seek, as my interest is not in answering these many questions specifically, but in exploring the classroom teachers' experience of curriculum as space, in listening to the classroom teachers' stories of the children they teach; the stories that exist because of the teachers' personal and responsible connection with the world (Welty, 1979, p. 46); the stories that speak with the voice of an individual '...bound up in the local, the real, the present, the ordinary day-to-day of human experience (Welty, 1979, p. 117); the story 'that comes out of human life and leads back into human life' (Welty, 1979, p. 58). For in keeping with the writing of Eudora Welty, "who could assess the moral and ethical dimension of place". and who "could create a context in which the universal was subtly evoked in the clarity of the particular" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p.7); or Eisner (1991) who explored the use of the "concrete universal" in our ability to make generalizations; I too expect, that in the telling of each teacher's personal stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1994a; 1994b) is the knowledge that will link curriculum theory to social and moral concerns, to classroom practice and student experience. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the understanding that will open the windows, and the key that will unlock the doors. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories is the community who will gather 'round to listen, inquire and reflect, and the collective strength that will open the spaces. In the telling of each teacher's personal stories in a response-filled community is the space to hope (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994a, 1994b).

## .... Epilogue: Reframing the past

D. As I write the final chapter of our research story, I am also beginning a new year with my grade four students. It is such a busy time that I am finding it difficult to make a space to write but there are deadlines to meet and stories still to tell so like Margaret, "I will continue." But as I move forward, I am pulled back. I am reminded of one of the many beginnings of this story - something I wrote before I began this research journey, before I met the teachers who would share their stories with me, before my stories were shared in the good company of our storytelling group, before we had constructed a middle space where private and public selves could meet in conversation.

It was June 22, 1990 and I was completing my application to begin a doctoral program at the University of Alberta. I was also a very busy grade three teacher, doing all the things that teachers do at the end of the school year. At that time, I had no idea that my life, my teaching, my research and my writing would become intertwined in my research story five years later or that I would be revisiting these beginnings so much later. But with little time to complete the five hundred word essay that was to accompany my application, I hastily assembled a few biographical and professional details to include on the required form and used my remaining breath to write a poem.

Autobiographical Poem

The stage is set, the trenches dug
The battle lines are drawn
The day is here, the hour is late
And time is almost gone.
The task at hand can not be done
Before the deadline falls
And I am left with no escape
For now the bugle calls.
Introspection fills my thoughts
But I can not delay
And trying to explain myself
Won't take the task away.

Desperation sets the mood
But courage gives the tone
To thoughts that were not written down
For lack of time alone.

Thoughts that won't be clothed in beauty
For the world to read
Thoughts imprisoned in sparse words
That time and space decreed.
Thoughts that became precise directions
For methods of attack
Thoughts compressed in minute spaces
Meanings still intact.

Poems that were not conceived
Lie in an early grave
Stories gone and not retrieved
That no one thought to save.

Plays extinguished at the flame
Where meaning died in vain
And words dress now in barest form
Find rhythm in their pain.

Lonely words like skeletons
        Marching across time
Lonely words like skeletons
        No time now for rhyme
Lonely words like skeletons
        Harmony unborn
Lonely words like skeletons
        Naked - Sad - Forlorn.

*Anne's Reflection: I see middle space as the life breath which inflates the classroom, which makes it three-dimensional, which opens it up.*

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
(T.S. Eliot, 1971).

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